RE-IMAGINING YUGOSLAVIA
Learning and Living with Diverse Cultural Identities

by

Radoslav Draskovic

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

©Copyright by Radoslav Draskovic 2010.
Abstract of Thesis:

This thesis uses the example of Yugoslavia—the land of the South Slavs (also known as the Balkans) - to study how the twists and turns of historical evolution have been reflected in communal understanding of that history.

Key words: imagined communities, nation-state, historical memory, the study of history.
Acknowledgments:

The great Mahatma Gandhi once said: “Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it”. I found that this sentence appropriately describes every human endeavor including the road I have chosen for the last three years of my life. This thesis marks the conclusion of a deeply personal journey as well as a great learning experience that I had at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at University of Toronto.

At the end of this trip, before anyone else, I would like to thank my professors Harold Troper and David Levine who have taught me a great deal during the course of my studies, with their views, knowledge and advice. I am especially grateful to my mentor, Professor David Levine, for his intellectual guidance, patience and understanding of all the challenges that I met during the course of my study and while writing this thesis.

I owe special gratitude to my friends, Edin Tabak and Nenad Vuckovic, both fellow graduate students in Australia and Austria respectively, who read my papers and my thesis and contributed with their valuable suggestions. I am deeply grateful to Douglas Sokolyk for his help during the course of my studies, his support and his invaluable friendship. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank Chris Sokolyk who edited the last few chapters of my thesis.

My studies would be much more difficult without the support of two special friends, Srebrenka Bogovic and Enrico Forte, who have read and edited each of my papers and a large portion of this thesis. I am most indebted to both of them for their sharp editorial eye, sense of humor, endless e-mails, and their unwavering support from the very beginning to the end of my studies.

Finally I am most deeply grateful to the three most important women in my life: To my wife Gordana for her patience - as she lost her husband to the historical sciences for the last three years - as well as for constantly challenging my picture of the world for the last 25 years. I am most thankful to my daughter Sonja for finding the time in her busy teenage life to deal with her dad, his English, and his obscure themes from the
murky world of her origins. Without her help and support this journey would be much harder if not totally impossible. And finally to the memory of my mother Nevenka, for teaching me with her life many invaluable lessons especially the one that real communities are always more important than imagined ones.
Table of Contents:

Abstract ..................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iii
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................ v

Chapters:

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   Living with the ‘Other’ ................................................................................................. 2
   Nation: a Fate or a Construct? ..................................................................................... 5

2. Balkanisation of the Balkans, (sixth century-1914) .................................................... 13
   The Lines of Division ................................................................................................ 15
   The ‘Ethnic Cyclones’ and the Military Frontier ....................................................... 19
   The Myths and the Golden Ages .............................................................................. 23
   Imagined Communities .............................................................................................. 25
   The Language of Volk ............................................................................................... 28
   The Serbs, the Croats and the Yugoslavs .................................................................... 31
   The Issue of Bosnia ................................................................................................... 34

3. The First Yugoslavia (1918-1941) ............................................................................. 42
   The Great War and Unification ................................................................................. 42
   The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes ............................................................ 45
   Socio-economic Divisions ......................................................................................... 47
   The Centralists, the Unitarists and the Hard Opposition ............................................ 49
   Cultural Bonds ........................................................................................................... 55
   Royal Dictatorship and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia ................................................... 58
   The War and the Formation of the Second Yugoslavia .............................................. 62
4. Tito’s Yugoslavia (1945-1980) ................................................................. 70
   The Dictatorship of the Proletariat ......................................................... 71
   The Quarrel with Stalin ....................................................................... 78
   The New Course ................................................................................. 80
   The Reformists versus the Conservatives ............................................ 82
   Yugoslavia’s Golden Age ...................................................................... 85
   The Croatian Spring and the Serbian Liberals ....................................... 89
   The Bosnian Question .......................................................................... 96
   The Last Constitution ......................................................................... 100

5. The Death of Yugoslavia (1981-1991) .................................................. 103
   Unravelling at the Seams .................................................................... 103
   The Albanian Question .................................................................... 107
   The Culture of Apocalypse ................................................................ 111
   The Cultural Wars ........................................................................... 115
   The Rise of Slobodan Milosevic .......................................................... 120
   The Media Wars ............................................................................. 127
   A Perfect Enemy ............................................................................. 130
   Against the Wind ........................................................................... 136
   Slow Slide Towards Catastrophe ........................................................ 138
   War in Croatia .............................................................................. 140
   Bosnian Tragedy ........................................................................... 145
   One Country, Three Nationalisms ..................................................... 148
   At the Gates of Hell ...................................................................... 155

   War for a Memory ........................................................................... 163
   Bosnia Divided ............................................................................. 165
   Cultural Cleansing ........................................................................ 173
   With God on Our Side .................................................................... 177
Chapter One
Introduction

The former-Yugoslavia was made up of six republics, each representing a state with its dominant ethnic group and officially recognized nation. Bosnia was an exception; its complicated history and distinct ethnic make-up defined it as the state of all three constitutive nations: Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims, today calling themselves Bosniaks. The history of Yugoslavia can be read also as a power struggle between the two largest ethnic groups, Serbs and Croats. The politics of both Yugoslavias¹ were always revolving around the uneasy relationship between Croats and Serbs. Jill Irvine argues that solving the so-called Croatian question, which over time would turn into the so-called Serbian question, would be crucial for the survival of Yugoslavia. The relationship of these two nations, conditioned by their intertwined population (together they made up almost sixty five percent of the total population and were spread over two thirds of Yugoslavia’s territory), and their different and often mutually exclusive national goals would define politics for most of their time together and eventually undermine the existence of the entire country.²

This power struggle would not be nowhere more obvious than on the territory of the Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter, Bosnia). By its character and structure, and a long culture of tolerance and diversity, Bosnia is quintessentially a multicultural society whose population has experienced a common history and belonged to common culture. Historically, Bosnia was always considered buffer zone between Croatia and Serbia, and the appearance of the nation and nationalism on the historical horizon would make it, as the Slovenian writer Josip Vidmar put it “the most complicated county in Europe.”³ During the last hundred and fifty years its people and territories were contested and claimed by Serbian and Croatian nationalists alike. The Second World War, as well as the last Yugoslav war (1991-1995), took place mainly on Bosnian territory, with devastating consequences for its civilian population, its multicultural make-up, and, ultimately, state

¹ The state that existed between the two World Wars is commonly referred as the First Yugoslavia. The one formed after the Second World War is referred as the Second Yugoslavia.
survival. Bosnian post war society has undergone tectonic political, social and cultural transformations. The area has become a place where the process of ethnic homogenization and the process of obtaining new cultural identities, have taken the most extreme turn.

The vastness of this topic requires certain limitations to be imposed upon this research paper, which will predominantly focus on analyzing the above-mentioned relations that determined the fate of Yugoslavia’s multi-ethnic society. The study will purposely neglect, or touch only marginally upon other ethnic groups and issues, except when they illustrate - or directly relate to - the main topic.

Living With the ‘Other’

Throughout history living with the ‘other’ has been one of the oldest and greatest challenges facing humans. Modern Western culture rests on the notion that man is a rational being, a concept not easily supported after centuries of warfare and constant conflict. Our inability to accept diverse ‘others’ might be deeply imbedded in the irrationality of our character as a species. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall argues that irrationality is something that not only defies logic and our educated way of thinking, but also pervades our lives more deeply than we want to believe. Hall is only one among many who contend that humans are products of their culture. Our cultural identity is deeply hidden, buried under many layers of conventions. It is securely identified by our mind as something to be taken for granted. But what we consider to be logical is very often ‘cultural logic’, and our reactions and behaviour have to be seen and understood against a larger cultural background. Different cultures were shaped by different historical, political, economic and social circumstances, creating differences that often obscure our common human nature. Our cultural identity is formed in an unconscious way; it is internalized within our own social group during a long process of acculturation. In that respect, “what has been thought of as mind is actually internalized culture.”

---

Ethnicity is only one of our multiple identities within which we find psychological security and assurance that protect us from the outside world. This hidden cultural inheritance is not innate but learned and, therefore, malleable. Yet, ethnicity is almost indefinable because it operates mostly on an unconscious level. Identification with our given culture happens very early in the process of socialization and personal development; it is one of the strongest bonds that hold communities and cultures together. Hall writes: “It is analogous to the forces that bind the nucleus of the atom together.”

The social and psychological support and comfort that is offered by a community cannot be underestimated. The ‘imagined community’ of people that make ethnic kinship might be unknown to each other, but they share the same sense of community, the same subtextual cultural coding that determines the way they behave, from the way they communicate to the way they raise their families, structure their societies or behave politically. These “deep cultural undercurrents” that control our behaviour are the reason why there is insistence that everyone conforms to the mores of the group, and why we are uncomfortable and anxious if we cross those invisible - but powerful - boundaries set by the group.

This cultural irrationality is deeply entrenched in our lives. We are simply unable to see ‘others’- or ourselves - within the multiple layers of one’s own culture. We prefer to think in simplifications and cultural stereotypes, unable to transcend the limits imposed on us by our own culture. Hall argues: “Ethnocentrism is inevitably characterized by irrational elements and, as long as it is widely shared, it is impossible to combat. Individuals sometimes do lose their prejudices, but whole groups are slow to change and in many instances give up one prejudice only to take on another. Individual irrationality is thought of as a product of the particular psychodynamics of person, whereas cultural irrationality is widely shared and therefore often thought to be normal.”

Our cultural identities are never static; they change, bend and shift as our contingent and complex reality dictates. The phenomenon of nation and nationalism is a recent newcomer in human history, a product of tectonic social changes that took place at the end of the nineteenth century. Notoriously, it resists analysis or definition.

---

5 Hall, Beyond the Culture, p.208.
6 Hall, Beyond the Culture, p.193.
Nevertheless, nation and nationalism would become dominant factors in defining cultural identities for many communities, in unprecedented ways. Hence, the bewildering question is: why nationalism, being such a historical novelty, and despite of its incoherence and shallowness, is so successful in dictating the way communities behave? As Benedict Anderson argues, despite its philosophical poverty, its success and power in mobilizing the masses is perplexing. It is relatively easy to see why political elites would find this particular construct useful in solidifying their grip on power, yet hard to answer why so many people subscribe to this idea, willing to kill or get killed for a membership in such imaginary community.

Anderson in his seminal work *Imagined Communities* defines the nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” He writes: “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Virtually any community that is larger than a village imagines a face-to-face contact; only the manner in which this is achieved distinguishes nations. That is why nation is always conceptualized as restricted, pure, enclosed, with finite boundaries, beyond which other nations exist. Stemming out of the age of Enlightenment, cultivated within the two revolutions (French and American) forged on the debris of the old, divinely ordained dynastic realm, it is seen as *sovereign* because new nations wanted a freedom only embodied in a sovereign state. And finally: “It is imagined as community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.”

---

Nation: a Fate or a Construct?

In “The Origins of Nations” Anthony D. Smith looks at this recent historical phenomenon without whose explanation our modern, complex world could be hardly understood. Nation and national states emerge on the vestiges of feudal system, at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. The nation is inextricably tied to the rise of the capitalism and the new ruling class - the bourgeoisie. These circumstances would give rise to the first set of theories - so called modernist theories. In this hypothesis, nations are seen as an abstract construct of the modern elites, whose only purpose was achieving the political and social unity of a particular land, a kind of social glue that was necessary to tie together large entities emerging on the territory of modern Europe.

Ernest Gellner proposes that nations and nationalism are historically contingent, but sociologically absolutely essential for modern industrial society. These conditions are met only in the era of modernity, which explains why the modern era is an age of nationalism. Industrial modes of production require a stable modern state, which provides individual mobility and cultural homogeneity. This can be achieved only through a universal public education system controlled by the state. School is the main institution through which high culture of the ruling classes can be imposed upon the rest of society. Through common culture and literacy everyone can be coerced to participate in the industrial society. The education system is the crucial link that ties state and culture. For Gellner, “modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land of a faith, whatever he may say, but to a culture.”¹⁰ Nationalism might be a recent phenomenon, but cultures have always existed and nationalism uses that fact for its own purposes, using the cultures selectively and then radically transforming them:

“Nationalism is not what it seems, and above all is not what it seems to itself. The cultures it claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions, or are modified out of all recognition…. Nations as a natural, God given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into

nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is reality, for better or for worse, and in general an inescapable one.”

Eric Hobsbawn likewise sees the nation as a social construct and points out its ultra-modern character. Hobsbawn acknowledges the existence of, what he calls “proto-national bonds” that can serve as a basis for nations. Yet he stresses the importance of modern elites which play a dominant role in organizing the masses into new communities by often using “invented traditions” in order to achieve social cohesion. For him nations are products of nationalism whose main goal is to build a nation state:

“Nations only exist as functions of a particular kind of territorial state or the aspiration to establish one-broadly speaking, the citizen state of the French Revolution—but also in the context of a particular stage of technological and economic development.”

Furthermore Hobsbawn underlines the importance of culture and the role that national intellectuals play in this process. They are the ones who do a subtle job of reinterpreting existing traditions and blending them with new “invented traditions”, in order to fit them within parameters set by a national culture, its language, myths, memories and traditions, thus enabling them to resonate with larger masses. However Hobsbawn insists on an engineered and invented nature of these traditions, arguing that existing traditions were heavily reinterpreted, edited, or romanticized, often to the point of no longer being recognized: “Historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity, either by semi-fiction or by forgery.”

It is hard to claim any continuity when we can discern how different these traditions are from their original form and how cultural identities were changed so easily and so often during the history.

---

11 Gellner as quoted in Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.57.
14 Hobsbawn insists that the study of invented traditions is indispensible for shedding the light on a phenomenon of nation and nationalism, national symbols and histories. For him, they are the product of recent social engineering and are misleading us into a belief that nations are rooted in antiquity and therefore eternal and natural: “Whatever the historic or other communities embedded in the modern
Smith objects to this idea and argues that intellectuals and elites are not inventing, but rather narrating ethnic memories, symbols and myths that bond communities together. At the same time, they are adapting and reconstituting cultural heritage to modern circumstances. He argues that the element of invention “is confined to the political form of that reconstitution, and it is misleading when it is applied to the sense of cultural identity which is the subject of reinterpretation.”15 By analyzing numerous examples of states in Africa and Asia he concludes that “absence of pre-existing statewide traditions, myths symbols and memories greatly hampers the process of national integration and that inventing national traditions does not, and cannot, by itself enable elites to forge a national community out of ethnically heterogeneous populations.”16

Smith argues that solving the question whether nations could be viewed as constructs or real historical entities is a fundamental and foremost task in the quest for their origins and, ultimately, their understanding. Although nations are recent phenomenon in the development of our societies, historical evidence suggests that they are based on something deeper, that is founded prior to the American, French and Industrial revolutions which are usually held to be responsible for ushering an age of nation states. Smith argues that nationalists “cannot, and do not, create nations ex nihilo”, and that we cannot deny existence of “durable cultural communities” throughout Antiquity and Middle Ages “that remained recognizably distinct to their own populations and to the outsiders.”17 These cultural groups distinguished themselves with the common name, shared common identity and sense of belonging to particular territory, religion, set of myths and common historical memories, customs or language. Those communities, named by Smith as ‘ethnies’ (the French term for ‘ethnic communities’), shared some

concept of ‘France’ and ‘the French’- and which nobody would seek to deny - these very concepts must include a constructed or ‘invented’ component. And just because so much of what subjectively makes up the modern ‘nation’ consist of such constructs and is associated with appropriate and, in general, fairly recent symbols or suitably tailored discourse (such as ‘national history’), the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the ‘invention of tradition.” Eric Hobsbawn, The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.14.

15 Smith, Nationalism and Modernism, p.131.  
16 Smith, Nationalism and Modernism, p.130.  
common elements with later established nations, but they cannot yet be called nations. Rather, *ethnies* will form a base for a nation’s creation, since a sole underlying sense of cultural community is not enough to form it. The onus is on the state to reach radially from the nucleus and into the realms of economy, military and education, but also to reach downward, along the social scale in order to encompass all strata of the society. The latter aim is achieved by using the network of state administration to realize nationalistic visions of political and intellectual elites.

Smith identifies two main bases and routes for nation formation. On the one hand there is, what he calls, *aristocratic* or *lateral ethnies* where myths of descent and cultural heritage belong to dominant ruling aristocratic class. Over time these myths are gradually imposed upon the lower strata of society. This was done through “bureaucratic incorporation”, in which the “upper class ethnies, managed to evolve a relatively strong and stable administrative apparatus, which could be used to provide cultural regulation and thereby define a new and wider cultural identity”.18 Through the strong bureaucratic administration the aristocratic elite would effectively link up a network of existing communities. A universal taxation and new military technologies facilitated the rise of cities, a growth of a new merchant class, and development of professional military.19 Yet, for Smith this does not mean that state actually ‘created’ a nation. It was certainly an indispensable condition, but without pre-existing cultural communities with a sense of common identity this would be an impossible task.

A different route to a nation forming was provided by, what Smith identifies as *demotic or vertical ethnies*. Forming nations in this manner was affected by the state and its administration in an indirect way only, since these communities were usually subject communities in large Empires. What these ethnies needed to forge a nation was a secular intelligentsia that would rediscover, transform, and even ‘produce’ common past, identify the set of dominant values, and redefine community’s goals for the future: “At the center of the self-appointed task of the intelligentsia stood the rediscovery and realization of the community. This entailed a moral and political revolution. In the place of a passive and subordinate minority, living precariously on the margins of the dominant ethnic society

---

19 England, France and Spain can be considered as the best examples of this type of nation formation that certainly greatly influenced all others.
and its state, a new compact and politically active nation had to be created (‘recreated’ in nationalist terminology).”20 To achieve these tasks educator-intellectuals had to provide a cultural framework, move masses to recognize their common origin and destiny, and provide them with a sense for the national territory. A homeland had to be not only delineated but also furnished with “poetic and historical connotations”. Myths of a ‘golden ages’ had to be invented, the masses had to be mobilized to achieve the goal of a new unified state:

“Among subordinate, demotic ethnies, the state is a target and a culturally alien one. It falls therefore, to a returning intelligentsia to turn elements of an existing culture into a national grid and moral exemplar, if the civic nation is to be formed and its members to be mobilized for ‘nation-building’. In the creation of a ‘community of history and destiny’, the historicism of the educator-intellectuals provides the nation-to-be with its genealogy and purpose.”21

These demotic ethnies form a majority of nations today, especially when dealing with the South Slavs who are the main actors in this narrative.

Despite their differences regarding the origins of nations, all scholars agree on the topic of the cultural roots of nationalism. Anderson, like Smith, sees resemblance between nationalism and the great religious systems that owe their survival through the centuries to their “imaginative response to the overwhelming burden of human suffering-disease, mutilation, grief, age and death.”22 Our susceptibility to nationalism - as with to religion - might be deeply rooted in our inability to accept the contingencies of life, to explain inherent conditions of human suffering, futility of death, and finally our desire to transcend boundaries of our limited lifespan. Unlike other great ideologies of the nineteenth century - Liberalism or Marxism - which are not concerned with death and suffering, nationalism offers “secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning”.... since nations “always loom out of an immemorial past, and still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn

22 Anderson, Imagined Communities, p.10.
chance into destiny.”23 Anderson is not suggesting that nationalism is ‘superseding’ religion, but rather that “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with a large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being.”24

Among the vast diversity of cultures found on our planet, the differences between ethnic groups that comprised the former-Yugoslavia appear miniscule. Threading a fine line between psychology and social theories in an effort to shed a light on the ethnic phenomenon many sociologists subscribe to Freud’s notion of the “narcissism of minor difference.”25 Freud argued that the smaller the difference is between two peoples, the larger it looms in their imagination. Simply stated, Serbs, Croats, or Bosniaks, as rather similar, needed to deny their similarity and enlarge their differences in order to define themselves against each other. The perceived mirror-image compelled them to “need each other to remind themselves who they really are. Without hatred of the other there would be no clearly defined national self to worship and adore.”26 Although the phenomenon of nations is essentially social in its definition, one needs all the help of other disciplines such as psychology and anthropology to define it correctly. As will be described in the account that follows, political forces always designed (or abused) cultural boundaries that outlined separate national identities. Yet, as Smith argues those “non-rational elements of the explosive power and tenacity in the structure of nations” have to be recognized: “In this sense, the formations of nations and the rise of ethnic nationalism appears more like the institutionalization of a ‘surrogate religion’ than a political ideology, and therefore far more durable and potent than we may care to admit.”27

Is a nation only a political unit or a social and cultural entity, or does it operate simultaneously on multitude of levels? This is an important question, when one considers

23 Anderson, Imagined Communities, pp.11-12.
24 Anderson, Imagined Communities, p.12.
26 Ignatieff, Blood and Belonging, p22.
its political implications. Yet its importance for social cohesion and its influence on collective cultural identity is indisputable. The authentic culture is seen as a social process in which individuals not only participate, but also simultaneously create and are also shaped by it. It is by its very nature always dynamic, open and inclusive. Nationalism and nation, on the other hand, are always imagined as limiting, exclusive and closed: “No nation imagines itself conterminous with mankind.”28 This makes our ‘imagined community’ inaccessible to a different ‘other’, which is always perceived as a threat to the purity and exclusiveness of our community. The question is: can a nation as a political entity and ‘imagined community’ be transformed into a living organism capable of inclusion, acceptance, and change, as real communities and cultures always did, throughout the history of our civilization, before they were concentrated into a tight frame of the nation state? Why and how were the complex cultural identities of the people of Yugoslavia and Bosnia, in particular, reduced only to one narrow dimension only, to that one of nationality? Was the descent to a hell of war and ethnic disintegration inevitable for their people? How can an ethnically - culturally - and socially - diverse population manage its affairs peacefully within the political frame of a single nation-state? Can we see beyond the illusion of nation, beyond the language of ‘blood and belonging’, beyond prejudice and misunderstanding, and finally beyond our own culture, to comprehend our common human destiny? The above questions form a point of departure in examining the circumstances surrounding the rise and demise of the former-Yugoslavia and the ultimate dissolution of the country.

The aim of this study is not to propose any definite answers regarding the perplexing and elusive question about the nature of the nation and nationalism. Rather it attempts to shed more light on the ways in which nationalism became a decisive factor in determining, shaping, shifting, and ultimately reducing, cultural identities of ethnically very similar people. It emphasizes the constructed nature of nationalism and our ever-changing identities, and attempts to clarify a complicated set of reasons why people who lived, more or less peacefully, side-by-side for centuries, sharing deep ethnic and cultural traits and ties, came to consider each other as mortal enemies within a very short period of time. It also endeavours to illustrate how different national communities were

28 Anderson, Imagined Communities, p.7.
converging and diverging away from the idea of a multicultural society embodied in the former-Yugoslavian state, and why they have seen themselves in such profoundly different roles.

The study will argue that the break up of the multiethnic society of the former-Yugoslavia is not a consequence of ancient hatred and biological predisposition among the Yugoslav people, but rather a complex event shaped by contingent economic, historical, social, cultural, and political forces. The essay will argue that this has to be seen as an aftermath of a long economic crisis, lack of democracy, weak civil society, the failure to develop effective institutional mechanisms to arbitrate and settle differences between constitutive parts, and, above all, the result of skilful manipulation of a power-hungry group of politicians who used ethnicity - and its darker side - nationalism, as a means to achieve their political goals. The same way that the nation itself is a real phenomenon and a social construct, the crisis in Yugoslavia was a product of a complex and turbulent history that resulted in visible social and cultural differences between the people who lived there, but at the same time it was a construct of the political elites that would not stop short of war in order to achieve their political goals.
Chapter 2
Balkanization of the Balkans
Sixth Century-1914

Among all the turbulent events that marked the Balkan’s history, the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, is perhaps the best known. Those infamous shots marked not only the beginning of the most violent century in human history, but proved to be a fateful crossroad for the common coexistence of the South Slavs. Princip and his organization were small players in this saga, but they were the tip of the larger Pan-Slavic movement that engulfed the minds of the South Slav intelligentsia at the time.

The first Yugoslavian state was the product of efforts of the most enlightened minds of that time. It emerged in 1918, at the end of the devastating war, out of the vestiges of two large disintegrating empires on a bitterly divided European continent. Seven decades later, the Yugoslavs would be torn apart by a “retrograde, mythical, antimodern vision”\(^1\), on the periphery of the prosperous and amalgamating European continent.

The imagined community of Princip’s contemporaries was very different from the imagined communities of those who, seventy years afterwards, fired the shots into their common state. What happened? Why had the developmental pattern of the Yugoslav multicultural society resulted in such a radically different outcome than the European model?

The Balkans are the crossroad where three great religions and civilizations met head-on. For two millennia, the Roman and Byzantine Empires, the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, the Venetians and the Hungarians, have all coveted these territories. The history of the South Slavs on the Balkan Peninsula is, on one the hand, the history of migration, ethnic coexistence and pluralism and, on the other hand, a struggle for survival and liberation from foreign rulers, who were always competing for dominance over these territories and their populations.

---

The time spent under different rulers left a deep impact on the cultural identities of the South Slavs. Although bound by a common origin and ethnic similarities, they were divided by cultural differences, stemming from a process of acculturation to these diverse cultural and political realms. Borders that divided them were already in place, designed in centres of political power generally far removed from the Balkans. Yet, the intelligentsia never forgot their common origins and never ceased dreaming of some sort of a wider Slavic unification. This effort stemmed not only from ethnic and language similarities but also from the need to rely on each other in order to resist the influences of foreign occupiers and retain their ethnic identity.

The outcome of the World War I catastrophe enabled the South Slavs to realize the goals of the long struggle for liberation and self-determination from foreign rule. But it was precisely the act of formation, and the nature of the long-coveted state that contained the seeds of its own destruction. The ill-conceived and poorly realized concept of the nation-state produced the effect of the “ethnic syndrome politics.” It would lead to the bloody conflict of the Second World War, and ultimately dominate Yugoslav society as the understating factor, for the next seven decades.

In 1919, Yugoslavs were a blend of very different tribal cultures, the product of long centuries of development under diverse foreign rulers. Seven decades later, it is ironic that they were more similar than ever in history. The life in the relatively stable Tito’s state brought them together, smoothed out most of the cultural differences, and developed new common traits and bonds. For almost fifty years - from 1945 onwards - they had intermixed, intermarried, befriended each other, and were exposed to same set of policies, educational system, and a common culture. Several generations were born and raised who knew nothing different from Tito’s state. For almost five decades, the real communities prevailed over imagined ones, “the cherished komsiluk - one’s neighbourhood - was infinitely more important to most Yugoslavs than ethnicity.”

In 1980, after the death of Tito, who had been the supreme arbiter in all Yugoslavian arguments, a power vacuum appeared. Power hungry politicians turned towards the underlying national question. The “narcissism of small differences” was

---

3 Udovicki, “The Bonds and the Fault Lines” in Udovicki&Ridgeway, Burn This House, p.35.
awakened. This divisive politics started the final act of separation of the parts that no longer functioned as one body. The history of the Yugoslavs was rewritten yet again. Myths of golden ages were reconstructed, political discourses were mythologized. Past grievances were enlarged and blown out of proportion. Unable to modernize country’s political system or resolve its economic problems, political elites decided to split the country, regardless of the terrible cost for their own constituencies.

It could be argued that the “Balkanization of the Balkans”4 was the legacy of the power game between the great Empires, which had clashed over that territory. Ethnic animosity was not calmed but rather encouraged and used as a tool to divide and rule. Yet it is important to point out that during the many centuries of foreign occupation no ethnic conflict had ever occurred between the cultural sub-groups who together comprised the South Slavs. Ironically, it was Princip’s shots that set them on that path for the first time. This chapter will attempt to clarify the conjuncture that enabled unique political, economic, cultural, and demographic factors to create and to define the lines of cultural separation, thereby setting the stage for future political divisions between the South Slavs. Without explaining these deep historical issues it is impossible to understand the final outcome of the Yugoslav tragedy.

The Lines of Division

South Slavs are the tribes of common origin who had migrated from the area of today’s Ukraine in the sixth century. After defeating, eradicating or assimilating the local population of the Roman colonies, these tribes settled on the Balkan Peninsula. Their initial conquest of the Balkans was protracted, lasting a whole century. The line that would divide the South Slavs was established even before their arrival on the peninsula, with the division of the Roman Empire between the East and West at the end of the fourth century. By the late nine and tenth century most South Slavs had been converted to Christianity.

After the final schism within the Christian church in 1054, future Croatians, Slovenians and Bosnians remained in the sphere of influence controlled by the Roman Catholic Church and future Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians in the realm of the Eastern Orthodox faith. Most of the South Slavs, after the initial period of prosperity formed medieval states which, when faced with more formidable powers surrounding them, ultimately fell. Yet these memories have been perpetuated and preserved in folklore, national myths and legends, which became the core of their national narratives and their cultural identities.

In the centuries prior to the advent of the nation-state, the population of Europe had their identities shaped on a local level by belonging to a certain family, tribe or most commonly wrapped around their religious affiliation. The South Slavs were no exception. The adherence to the three principal religious denominations shaped the collective identities of these groups in a distinct way for centuries, even before they came to think of themselves in terms of nationality. As Banac suggest, despite the fact that the South Slavs often demonstrated indifference towards faith and lack of devotion, their religious

---

5 The new masters of the Balkan Peninsula were mentioned for the first time in the writings of the Byzantine Emperor and historian Constantine Porphyrogenitus. In “De Administrando Imperio” written in the tenth century, he describes the first three tribes that conquered the Balkans, Bulgars, Croats and Serbs. Medieval Croatia was formed on coastal territory in central Dalmatia. The central inland area of Croatia, Slavonia, was acquired under the reign of King Tomislav (910-928) who waged constant wars with his northern neighbour, Hungary. Under King Kresimir in the eleventh century Panonian and Dalmatian parts of Croatia were united into a single state. Dalmatian cities enjoyed municipal autonomy under the Byzantine rule, until the fifteenth century when they passed into Venetian hands. By that time, Croatization of these former Roman enclaves (the Roman Dalmatia) was completed. Parts of Croatia were for a short period of time under the Ottoman rule until the late sixteenth century when borders finally stabilized after the formation of the Military Frontier. Serbs on the other hand, formed their early state on territory in Raska (Rascia) The Nemanjic dynasty of Serbian kings was founded in the early twelfth century. Soon after, under Stefan Nemanja it expanded first to the east and then south, conquering today’s Macedonia. During the reign of Stefan Dusan (1331-1355) Serbia started expanding and grew to cover large parts of Balkan Peninsula, including the territory of most of Greece. Dusan’s capital and place of his imperial coronation was Skopje (today’s capital of Macedonia). After his death Serbia broke into several principalities, each ruled by different despots, who were constantly warring with each other. This made the country particularly vulnerable to a looming Ottoman conquest. The only other South Slav country that Porphyrogenitus mentioned was a “little land of Bosnia” squeezed between medieval Croatia and Serbia. In the early thirteenth century Bosnia would complete its consolidation, and, under the Kotromanic Dynasty, Bosnian rulers would build the last major South Slavic medieval state. Stjepan II Kotromanic (1314-1353) seized Hum from Serbia and gained an exit to the Adriatic Sea at the expense of Croatia. During his son’s Tvrtko reign (1353-1391), royal power was centralized. Mostly taking advantage of the internal weaknesses of Hungary and Serbia, he expanded Bosnia to the Adriatic coast and briefly laid claim to the thrones of Serbia, Dalmatia, and Croatia. This geographical position between the two larger Slavic neighbors, and on the remote periphery of the two large and diverse civilizations, was of crucial importance in determining Bosnia’s fate. Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia-Origins, History, Politics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1984, pp.31-40.
affiliation “was of most decisive importance for the cultural and political content of nationality.”

The process of Christianisation of the South Slavs was a protracted and complex affair. The Serbs found themselves east of the fault line dividing the two worlds, yet their membership in the Orthodox community was not inevitable. The ecclesiastical border was in flux, unstable like the religious affinity of medieval lords and their constantly shifting alliances. After the Crusaders’ short conquest and pillage of Constantinople in 1204, the two churches finally cut off all relations. This presented the Serbian ruling dynasty with an unexpected opportunity to strengthen its position. Stefan Prvovjencani obtained his royal crown from the Pope in 1217, but his brother Rastko obtained permission from the exiled Byzantine emperor and patriarch to establish an autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church (1219), with himself as its first head. From then on the Orthodoxy slowly became inextricable part of Serbian state culture.

The later Ottoman conquest produced some unexpected twists on the process of Serbian nation formation. Serbian historical memory remained wrapped around the lost-greatness of its medieval state but was also influenced by the years of harsh Turkish rule, when Serbia had lost much of its population, which was killed or pushed into exile. For the next five centuries the Serbian Orthodox Church would emerge to play a prominent role not only as a spiritual but also as the secular leader of the Serbian people, securing its dominant role in shaping Serbian national consciousness and the future state building efforts.

---

6 Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.60.
7 The first king of Old Serbia, Stefan Nemanja received the Latin baptism and his state respected and maintained both traditions in provinces of Orthodox Raska and catholic Duklja, later Zeta (today’s Montenegro). Nemanja’s son Vukan, the ruler of southern province Zeta, was a devout Roman Catholic. See Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.64.
8 Rastko took a monastic vow at Mt. Athos, and under the monastic name of Sava became one of the most important figures of Serbian history as he contributed greatly towards cultural and spiritual unification of the Serbs. See Sima Cirkovic, The Serbs, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2004, p.42-6.
9 The Ottoman Empire ruled its subjects with the so-called ‘millet’ system. Under this system all non-Muslim religious communities were exempt from Islamic law, thus they were granted self-government under their respective religious leaders, as long as they were loyal to the Porte and paid their taxes regularly. In 1557, the Porte authorized the autocephalous Serbian Patriarchate centered in Pec (Kosovo). The rule that all dealings of the Orthodox subjects with the Ottoman state were to be conducted through the Patriarchate, made the patriarchs of Pec not only spiritual, but also secular authorities, granting them power that previously belonged to Serbian kings only. Moreover, the Patriarchate became a representative of all Orthodox subjects within the Western Balkan, not only the Serbs, which, as Banac argues, provided Serbs with a great instrument of national expansion. The Patriarchate fortunes declined during the course of the
Croats found themselves west of the line separating two worlds, bitterly divided by the faith in the same god. In the Catholic realm, the role of the Church was not as dominant because of its different organisational structure. Even though local elements and traditions existed in Catholic culture, the Church was not a national institution as in Orthodox dominion.\(^{10}\) Although their culture developed as a part of the Roman Catholic - and, therefore, Western European - realm, their ethnic origin and the fact that they spoke the same language as their ethnic kin inhabiting the other ecclesiastical realm tied them forever to a South Slav world and made them less than a perfect followers of the Roman Church: “Though Catholic (and therefore separated from Orthodox Slavdom), the Croats constantly resisted the Latin universalism of the Roman Church, and were thus hardly typical representatives of the trends in Catholic Slavic countries.”\(^{11}\)

From the earliest times Bosnia had one peculiarity that would confirm its individuality and strong identity. Although Bosnia officially belonged to the Roman

---

Vienna War (1683-1699), as it proved disloyal to the Ottomans, by backing, together with the Habsburgs, insurgency among the Serbs. In 1689, the Habsburg army raided Bosnia and marched deep into Serbia. Serbs saw this as opportunity to shed the Turkish yoke and massive rebellion took place. Yet, in the next year the Turks regrouped and managed to push the Austrians back, withstanding the wall of the Military Frontier. Led by their Patriarch many Serbs joined Austrian army during their withdrawal, fleeing into southern Hungary. The Church and refugees demanded autonomy, which was soon granted by the always-calculating Habsburgs. The Patriarchate was reconstituted as a Metropolinate, and centered in Sremski Karlovci in the Slavonian part of the Military Frontier. The Patriarchate of Pec was officially abolished in 1776, but by that time, the center of Serb cultural life already had shifted to the new settled lands, north of river Danube. Here the Serbs would be exposed and assimilated to the cultural climate of central Europe.


\(^{10}\) Unexpected linguistic turmoil at the end of the ninth century affected the primacy of Latin as a language of Church liturgy in Croatia. In the ninth century two Byzantine Greek brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodius (canonized by both Churches) embarked on the task to codify the language of liturgy into Slavic idioms. By adapting the Old Church Slavonic, to the new Glagolitic script they invented (also known as Glagolitsa), they hoped to facilitate the further evangelization of all Slavic people from the Baltic to the Adriatic. Although the Roman papacy disapproved of the use of ‘barbaric’ native tongues in liturgy, their mission was supported by Pope John VIII, who was hoping that language uniformity could eventually benefit Rome in extending its influence in Central Europe, of course at the expense of Byzantium. But soon, after his death in 882, Rome withdrew its support, and the disciples of Cyril and Methodious were exiled from Central Europe, finding shelter in Bulgaria and Byzantine Dalmatia. From Dalmatia, Slavic liturgy spread to Croatia proper. While all Croats belonged to the Catholic tradition, some churches used Latin liturgy and script, while others used Church Slavonic and Glagolitic script. This linguistic turmoil gave freedom to Croatian priests, who were no longer obliged by a higher authority to maintain the integrity and structure of the Church’s Slavonic language. They started to enrich it with the elements of Croatian everyday language. By the end of the fifteenth century this practice gave rise to Croatian vernacular literature in Dalmatia and especially in the Dubrovnik area. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p.62.

Catholic realm, the independent Church of Bosnia followed a different, heretical doctrine. The kings of Bosnia were also tolerant towards the growth of a neo-Manichean sect of the Bogumils and tolerated their presence in the country for a long time. The Ottoman conquest of Bosnia was protracted affair. It took place over almost whole century and was only completed in 1463. That fateful moment would open the new chapter, not only in history of Bosnia, but also in all South Slav affairs.

The ‘Ethnic Cyclones’ and the Military Frontier

The Ottoman conquest was a moment of crucial importance in the history of Balkans as it resulted in a social change of tectonic magnitude. It produced, what Banac calls, the wave of “ethnic cyclones”, which not only further complicated the existing ethnic settlement in the region but also cemented its status of unstable border between two diverse worlds. As a result of the conquest two events would prove decisive for centuries to come.

The first one was Bosnia’s massive conversion to Islam. Unlike the Western Europeans, the Ottomans were not interested in a cultural or religious homogeneity of

---

12 There is evidence that Bosnian rulers were tolerant towards diverse faiths on their territory. Lovrenovic stresses that, in addition to the multicultural parallelism that characterized Bosnia throughout history, there is an existence of a certain “degree of secularism that characterized all spheres of life, especially the spiritual and creative. In this Bosnia differed from the rest of Europe, where the Middle Ages was a time of ecclesiastical domination, dogmatism and religious exclusiveness.” Yet, the allegations of heresy made Bosnia the target for several crusades launched by Hungarian kings that tried to subjugate the state, under a pretext of bringing the official Church back into Pope’s realm. With the same purpose, organized and intensive action of Catholic missionary activity was increased over the course of the fourteenth century. The Bosnian nobility, noticing the Ottoman danger on the horizon, and realizing that the Catholic West might help them, increasingly warmed up to a full return into the Catholic realm. Lovrenovic, Bosnia: A Cultural History, p.53.

13 The conquest was completed with the fall of Jajce where the last Bosnian king was captured and beheaded. Bosnia was incorporated in the Ottoman Empire as Bosnian elajet (province) whose territory was expanded at expense of Serbia and Croatia. Over next two centuries most followers of the Church of Bosnia converted to Islam, severing all connections with their medieval state.

14 Three quarters of Bosnian population converted. The reasons for such enormous conversion and profound change of identity remain not fully explained and somewhat perplexing, but it is most probably due to weakness and anarchy prevailing in the Bosnian Church and the desire of Bosnian aristocracy to hold on to their power and land titles. The Ottoman occupation of Serbia started earlier and lasted longer, and yet massive conversions were absent there. The absence of coercive conversion does not mean that oppression was not used against the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The Orthodox Church had, at least in the first two centuries of the Ottoman rule a slightly better position, as it was perceived as less threatening
their Empire but rather, under the rules of already mentioned millet system, stratified their population according to their religious affiliation. This system was responsible for preservation of the ethnic and religious diversity on territories they ruled. The concept of nationality that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century followed the line of this religious division, by that time deeply ingrained in social fabric. It created additional problems in Bosnia, further complicating affairs of all South Slavs.\(^{15}\)

Islam was never forced upon anyone; rather its ranks were open to any person willing to convert. Islamicization was enticing because it carried significant social and economic advantages for converts.\(^{16}\) Serfs willing to convert were granted freedom; feudal landlords who converted could keep their lands and titles, and become part of the new ruling elite. These measures produced a Muslim dominated social hierarchy.

Although the process of conversion was protracted, it enabled Bosnian Muslims to start the building their distinctive ethnic community wrapping their identity around the newly adopted religion. They slowly severed all ties with the medieval Bosnian state and to the Empire. With its Patriarch and the official Church seat in Istanbul it was seen as controllable and treated as almost the second official religion of the Ottoman Empire. Also, before the Turkish conquest there was a small Orthodox presence in Bosnia (except for a territory of eastern Herzegovina). The Catholic Church, on the other hand was the official Church of the Habsburg enemy waging constant wars against the Ottomans. The Bosnian dominant Franciscan order was therefore treated with constant suspicion. Also, most of the unconverted population of Bosnia at the time was of Catholic denomination. Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, p.55. See also, Robert J. Donia and John V.A. Fine, Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed, Columbia University Press, 1995, pp.38-40.

The Bosnian populations were greatly mixed as a result of many conversions and constant migrations. Bosnian church members were converting not only to Islam, but also to Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. In addition, the members of the Catholic and Orthodox churches were converting to Islam and to each other faith. Yet it has to be stressed that until the nineteenth century Bosnians kept their regional distinctiveness and never called themselves Serbs or Croats but simply Bosnians. Moreover, the rules of the millet system complicated already complex ethnic and religious conditions existing in Bosnia. Banac explains: “The Ottoman way of dividing peoples by religious community is the key to Bosnian national mutations. The Catholics maintained links with Croatia. The growing Orthodox community established ties with Serbia. Together with the Muslims, they accepted and maintained their regional appellation. Moreover, in those areas where pre-Bosnian national traditions survived, the Muslims simultaneously kept up memory of their Croat or Serb origin.” Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.40. Also see Donia and Fine, Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed, p.35.

Malcolm argues that another enticing factor was serious legal discrimination towards Christians. Christian subjects - so called raya - could not bring any lawsuit against Muslims, and their testimony could not be used in court against Muslims. Bosnian Muslims also enjoyed special status among all Other Ottoman subjects. They were taxed less than Christian of Jewish communities, and they enjoyed more self-governance. Bosnian towns were not forcibly colonized with Anatolian migrants. Bosnian territory was enlarged to include parts of Croatian coast and Slavonia, and parts of Serbian Old Raska (Sandzak). Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, p.66.
started thinking of themselves as the ‘bulwark of the Ottoman fortress’. Although they continued to speak the Bosnian language and kept the memory of their Slavic origin alive, they often identified themselves as “Turks by virtue of their faith.”

The second, long-lasting effect, and one of the crucial decisions that would mark relationship between the South Slavs for centuries to come, was the establishment of the so-called *Vojna Krajina* (Military Frontier) in 1576. It was conceived and created by the Habsburg king Ferdinand, and his successor Maximilian II, by offering a settlement to Serbian refugees who were fleeing Serbia after the defeat from the Ottomans. This vast human shield - in the shape of a crescent - acted as a buffer zone that would protect the rest of Europe from the Turks, who by that time had conquered neighbouring Bosnia and Serbia and started their final push towards the gates of Vienna. Settlers were given free land in exchange for military service for the Austrian Crown. They were exempt from paying taxes, granted local autonomy, and freedom to practice their Orthodox faith. Settlers were responsible only to the Habsburgs. The Military Frontier was in fact a separate Austrian province, only on Croatian territory.

The new circumstances caused an outrage within the Croatian ruling elites as well as among its wider population. Instead of turning their resentment towards Vienna, which implemented this state of affairs to suit its own interests, the lost sovereignty over the

---


18 Many sources point out that a large portion of these refugees was in fact of Vlach ethnic stock. Vlachs were decedents of Roman tribes, who survived original Slavic invasion in sixth century. Yet, this time they could not escape assimilation. The Catholic Vlachs mixed with Croats and often married into the nobility of Dalmatian cities that way being assimilated in Slavic culture as future Croats. The Orthodox Vlachs acquired Serb national consciousness through the missionary work of Serbian Orthodox Church. Turks who were also desperate to fill depopulated areas on their side of the Frontier were often populating them with Vlachs. This confirms complicated ethno genesis of South Slavs, as “no Slavic group is entirely free of Vlach component.” Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p.44. About Vlachs see also Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History*, pp.70-81.

19 Land had a huge value in feudal society, as it was the only source of livelihood for the people, and the main source of tax income for the state. Croatia’s nobles demanded that at least a rent be paid by settlers, but in 1630, Ferdinand II issued the ‘Statuta Valachorum’, giving the Vlachs and the Serbs right to stay on land without any compensation. In reprisal, the Sabor passed the laws prohibiting settlers from residing in Croatian towns or purchasing property in the rest of Croatia. With this move Croatia was practically divided into “Civil Croatia “governed by local Croatian nobles and “Military Croatia” ruled by Vienna. No wonder that Frontier’s existence was perceived as the greatest insult to Croatia’s ruling nobles and the threat to survival of Croatia. Its area covering 8000 square kilometers was only slightly smaller than the rest of Croatia, covering 10600 square kilometers. One member of Sabor referred to his country as “remnants of remnants of the once great and renewed kingdom.” Ivo Goldstein, *Croatia, A History*, C. Hurst& Co, London, 1999, p.41.
large piece of territory was blamed on the ethnic - but culturally very different - kin.\textsuperscript{20} The poverty and cultural isolation of newcomers gradually produced a sense of ‘otherness’. Faced with a distrust and hostility of the local population and confronting the constant threat from the Turks, settlers in Krajina gradually developed a rigid military mentality. The tension between these two cultures was actively fostered by Vienna and Budapest. It would prove to have a deep impact on the relations between the Croats and Serbs in the future: “The resentment that Serbs who were seen as intruders, encountered among all strata of the Croatian population merely strengthened their internal cohesion and militancy, and their belief that ‘home’ was in Serbia.”\textsuperscript{21}

The 1576 creation of the Military Frontier marked a significant influx of Orthodoxy into the western Balkans further complicating its religious map. This change caused the homogeneous communities of the Orthodox and Catholics to be fragmented and scattered, within otherwise relatively compact religious territory of the each group. Nevertheless, the two communities that at that time did not think about themselves as Croats and Serbs but, rather, had their identities wrapped around their religion, lived side-by-side. No armed conflict broke out between them until World War II. Despite all the prejudice and fear - and constantly orchestrated efforts by Austro-Hungarian authorities to keep these communities from bonding - a movement favouring Serbo-Croat unification started from Croatia a whole fifty years before the Military Frontier was incorporated back into Croatian territory in 1881.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} Distrust and animosity were prevalent not only among the ranks of nobility who lost their land titles, but also within the Roman Catholic Church because it regarded the Orthodox as schismatic. The lowest strata of society, the landless Croat serfs, found themselves in much worse economic condition than privileged newcomers. The Croats saw themselves as more culturally developed. Dalmatian cities, ruled by the efficient Venetians, were thriving trading hubs, supporting the rich cultural life. On the north of the country thick soils of Slavonia enriched local nobles and enabled them to emulate way of life of their Austrian and Hungarian masters. See Udovicki “The Bonds and the Fault Lines”, p.20.


\textsuperscript{22} There are numerous examples of animosity between two communities but there are also numerous examples of solidarity and mutual cooperation. The official contact between communities was especially intensified after the 1848 revolutionary movements. Josip Jelacic, a military officer and a firm believer in Illyrian ideas was elected Croatian Ban. Under his rule revolutionary trends from Europe would reach Croatia. In 1848 he issued proclamation that abolished serfdom and made privileged classes of nobility and clergy liable to taxation. In his installation ceremony as a Ban, in absence of the Catholic Bishop of Zagreb, Jelacic took an oath before Josif Rajacic, the Serbian Patriarch in the Habsburg Monarchy. This unprecedented scene, permeated with strong symbolism, called for cooperation and mutual reliance of these two communities. Goldstein, Croatia, A History, pp.70-1.
This historical conjunction is of the greatest importance because both ‘Serbo-Croatian wars’, in 1941 and 1991, have started in this region. The fact that Krajina’s Serbs developed a “garrison mentality” coupled with the fact that these isolated and underdeveloped areas did not provide any other opportunity for work or career, resulted in the grossly-disproportionate number of Serbian officers and generals in every army thereafter. This trend continued in the modern Yugoslav Army, which eventually contributed to the Army’s alliance with nationalistic leadership of Serbia that proved fatal for the very existence of Yugoslavia four centuries later.

The Myths and the Golden Ages

The struggle for identity is often crystallized in a form of the national myth that contains an image of suffering, which, as Smith suggests, gives a community its imagined home and furnishes it with ‘historic poetry’ to conveys its deepest desires.23

The Serbs had a myth in a classical sense of that word. The Battle of Kosovo Polje (Field of Blackbirds) that took place in 1389 provided the historical frame for the myth. Although the historical facts about this event are scarce, rich folklore furnished and rendered the battle a central pillar of Serbian national narrative. Cirkovic argues that the battle, the outcome of which we cannot be sure, was only the first of the big battles in the series of Turkish incursions. In fact, the Serbian kingdom would continue to exist for another seventy years, until its final fall in 1454. Yet in the popular imagination this battle was interpreted as a final blow to the Serbian state.24 The myth’s insistence on the battle as a tragic defeat had a deeper meaning and significance because it celebrated the martyrdom of Serbian people. It became a call for unity and vengeance until that time when the country would finally become free and restored.25

24 Little is known about the battle that took place on St. Vitus day, June 28, 1389. What is known is that Prince Lazar’s army, with the help of the Bosnian forces led by Vlatko Vukovic (sent as a help by Bosnian King Tvrtko, who was himself descendent of Nemanjica dynasty) confronted the Turkish forces, led by Sultan Murad I and his son Bayezid I. Both, Prince Lazar and Sultan Murad were killed in the battle. The exact size of their armies or the real outcome of the battle in not known. See Cirkovic, The Serbs, pp.82-5.
25 The narrative of this medieval myth follows the story in which God appeared to Prince Lazar Hrebljanovic, on the eve of the battle, in form of gray falcon. He offered him a choice between a kingdom on earth and victory over the Ottomans, and the kingdom of heaven, which presumed his death and a defeat
As Smith argues, this shared historical narrative of a real or imagined sense of suffering throughout history is one of the most defining elements of ethnicity, and the strongest cement that bonds any group together. Oral and written epic poetry that developed around this myth was a powerful preserver of the Serbian state tradition. It provided its creators with an unforeseen-but powerful-tool. The encapsulated message could be communicated with ease by illiterate masses, through the centuries and across the Balkans to reach all the scattered remnants of their tribe. It allowed the Serbs to physically and symbolically bond with their ‘imagined community’, by identifying with the struggle and suffering of their ancestors. In the times of national romanticism and the formation of the nation, as well as later in history, including the latest war in Yugoslavia when it was resurrected one more time, this powerful myth had a decisive role in political and cultural homogenization of Serbs, wherever they lived.

Croatians lacked a national myth in this classical sense but rather wrapped their national narrative around their own state. In the Catholic realm the role of the church was not as dominant, because of its different organizational structure. Although local elements and traditions existed in Catholic culture, the church was not a national institution as in Orthodox dominion. The Kingdom of Croatia lost its sovereignty in 1102, after only two hundred years of existence when the Hungarian King Koloman signed the “Pacta Conventa” with Croatian nobles, gaining with it his rule over Croatia. In exchange nobles kept their land titles and privileges. Croats also kept limited internal administration, including the institution of the Sabor (parliament) and the office of the Ban (governor). The “Triune Kingdom”, as Croatia was known, was always fragile and consisted of three very different geographical regions extending from north to south (Slavonia, Croatia proper, and Dalmacia). These lands were often under different foreign

---

26 In addition, the Serbian Church canonized almost all Serbian kings, “their names were recited in holy liturgies, day in and day out, for centuries, reminding even the most humble worshipers that holy kings of Serbian blood and language once reigned over them-and, it could be inferred, might do so again.” Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.68.
occupiers (the Habsburgs, the Hungarians and the Venetians), which resulted in different cultural influences. This fact, in addition, often caused irredentist tendencies and made the constituent parts notoriously hard to govern.

The Croat political elites adhered to the only visible expression of their state tradition and instrument of their integration: the Ban and the Sabor. Regardless of the weak authority of these institutions in real life, they were perceived as the only genuine and uninterrupted liaison with Croatia’s ‘golden ages’ and the expression of Croatia’s historical and state right: “The unity of Croatian lands as precondition to achieving full Croatian sovereignty was an historic theme of the Croat national movement. The division of what Croats referred to as the historic Croatian lands and the large number of Serbs residing within those borders, had made unity of Croatia a sensitive issue.”27 On the other hand, the diversity of their lands and cultural identities, would give the rise to a diapason of national ideologies. Regardless of those differences, the struggle for violated rights and perpetuation and maintenance of the Croatian state right became the hallmark of Croatian political culture. The idea of the legal continuity of the Croatian state in reality corresponded to an absence of sovereignty, and a constant struggle against the centralist policies of Vienna, Budapest, and, later, Belgrade. It would remain a fundamental theme of the Croatian narrative and would surface as an issue in every new state within which Croats found themselves. Croats in the absence of a classical myth rather treated mythically the very idea of state.28

Imagined Communities

The Enlightenment argued that the state created the people and defined the nation by what was in theory often called “civic nationalism.”29 This notion claims that the individual citizen is bearer of the sovereignty of the state and promotes its rational

---

29 The difference between ethnic (cultural) and civic (political) nationalism is well entrenched in the literature, but it rather should be, as Smith points out, analytical and normative one. Even most civic-political nationalisms often contain some elements of ethnic-cultural nationalism and the other way around. See Smith, Nationalism and Modernism, p.126.
attachment to the national community and the institutions of the state.\textsuperscript{30} At the end of the eighteenth century a movement of national romanticism swept Europe. German romantics argued that the sovereignty of the state should be vested in the \textit{Volk}, the romanticized image of German people, and defined their nation in terms of so-called “\textit{ethnic nationalism}”. They rejected French universalism and developed the vision of a nation as the ultimate cultural community, tied by the bonds of language, religion, ethnic traditions, and customs.\textsuperscript{31}

Ironically enough, all Slavs from Poles to Czechs and from Serbs to Croats, in their struggle to self-determination against foreign rule, would subscribe to a very same notion of ethnicity, and define their newborn countries as states of their \textit{Volk}: “Romantic nationalism became a flight from individualism and from individual rights, towards a vision of society in which the individual achieved inner freedom through an intense experience of belonging to the volk.”\textsuperscript{32} The problem with implementing this concept in the case of the South Slavs would be the rich and diverse demographic tapestry of the Balkans. Protecting the group rights, while vesting a sovereignty of state in one group would inevitably lead to some form of encroachment upon the rights of the minorities and create majoritarian domination.

Romantic theories considered language as one of the most important attributes of the nation. Benedict Anderson underlines the crucial role of language in formation of the nation, arguing that, what he calls ‘fatality’ of human diversity of languages is precondition for understanding nationalism and nation formation.\textsuperscript{33} The advent of print technology together with relentless political economy of capitalism, always in a search

\textsuperscript{30} This idea was realized by creation of the French and American republics, upholding that “the nation should be composed of all of those-regardless of race, color, creed, gender, language and ethnicity-who subscribe to the nation political creed.” Ignatieff, \textit{Blood and Belonging}, p.6.

\textsuperscript{31} This was product of Germany’s unique position in Europe. On one hand it was a revolt against Napoleon’s imperial ambitions and his invasion of German lands, between 1792 and 1813. It was also a German response to French cultural hegemony in Europe during this time, where political nationalism served as a unifying and modernizing ideology. On the other hand it was also an attempt to define itself as homogenous nation against the danger of assimilation that was coming from the long eastern border with Slavic nations. In both cases, it was fear for the ethnic survival that helped German intellectuals to turn towards unique features of their own culture and to develop their distinct definition of the national collective. Gregory Jusdanis, \textit{The Necessary Nation}, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001, pp.72-6.

\textsuperscript{32} Ignatieff, \textit{Blood and Belonging}, p.86.

\textsuperscript{33} Anderson applies an idea of fatality to a “general condition of irremediable linguistic diversity”. It should not be equated with “common element in nationalist ideologies which stresses the primordial fatality of particular languages and their association with particular territorial units.” Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}, p.43.
for profits, would give this fatality a strange twist. At the end of the sixteenth century
Latin as a sacred language, already esoteric and completely distant from masses, was
losing its primacy as the language of communication. At the same time Protestantism
started exploring the vernacular market in its war against the Papacy. Print-capitalism,
saturating the limited Latin market, turned towards the potentially huge emerging
vernacular markets created by Reformation. That shift further promoted literacy and the
knowledge of local vernaculars, giving print-capitalism an unforeseen boost. In addition,
it pressed emerging central governments to select and promote certain vernaculars as
official languages of administration in order to create better communication between the
government and its subjects who were becoming increasingly linked by daily bonds.

Creating standard forms helped in using the language as a main tool in political
centralization. Language was not a single factor, but rather all three, that converged and
in interplay gave a rise to the construct of nation: “What in a positive sense, made the
new communities imaginable was a half fortuitous but explosive, interaction between a
system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of
communications (print), and fatality of human linguistic diversity.”

As Anderson argues, this was a base for the creation of national consciousness
and cohesion in three ways. First, creating a field of communication “below Latin and
above spoken vernaculars” made it possible for growing numbers of people to imagine
themselves in a profoundly different way. As the members of new ‘imagined community’
they were enabled to communicate and suddenly became comprehensible to each other.
Second, capitalism forced the common language into print and in so doing it contributed
to the process of fixing and systemizing the ‘national’ language. The language
standardizers played a central role in every national culture and language, and indeed all
the architects of modern languages are well known, as this was a quite recent
accomplishment. Fixing language in print, paradoxically, gave it a notion of antiquity,

---

34 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.42.

35 Hobsbawn argues that despite of its central role in the early nation formation, the national language can
be hardly considered as a central element of the nation, because of its obviously constructed nature. It is
clear that “national” languages, in fact, created at first the community of an “intercommunicating elite”,
which could be a model for the larger community of the nation. Modern political elites had to select and
reform certain idioms from a myriad of mutually incomprehensible dialects spoken in Europe, because they
all could not be used as a base for administrative centralization and expansion. The reason why language
took a central role in German romantic theories of nation is that “Germany of the eighteenth century was a
an illusion of importance to the idea of the nation. Third, print capitalism by adapting certain dialects made them prepared to become the official language of modern state through public education and administrative mechanisms. The slow and uneven process of administrative unification has chosen some dialects over the others from the immense diversity of human languages. Had capitalism tried to cater to all of them indiscriminately, it would have never succeed: “Convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.”

The Language of Volk

The first attempts to forge modern nations, to foster their unity, and, eventually, to build a common identity among all South Slavs, were constructed on a linguistic base. This took place in several phases over the course of the nineteenth century. A motley group of Croatian intellectuals, poets, and priests, the most enlightened minds of the time, calling themselves the Illyrians saw a common language as a cornerstone of future national culture and most importantly as a device of liberation from foreign domination.

The movement was in resistance to the Magyar nationalism, which was itself the direct reaction of Hungarians to the Germanizing policies of Joseph II within the purely cultural concept, and yet, because it was the only one in which ‘Germany’ had a being, as distinct from the multiplicity of principalities and states, large and small, administered and divided by religion and political horizons, which were administered by means of the German language.” Hobsbawn, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780, p.61.

36 This further reveals the novelty and constructed nature of ‘national’ language. In 1789 only 50 percent of Frenchmen spoke French, and they were located in central region of France. In northern and southern France almost no one spoke French. Italy is another classic example. The only base for Italian unification was an ‘invented’ Italian language that united political and educated elites. It is calculated that at the moment of unification (1860) only two and the half percent of the population used the language for everyday purposes: “For this tiny group was, in a real sense a and therefore potentially the Italian people. Nobody else was.” Hobsbawn, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780, p.61.


38 Anderson, Imagined Communities, p.46.

39 The name of the movement invoked the name of the oldest known tribe to inhabit the Balkan peninsula and therefore symbolically conveyed a desire for historically neutral identity that should bring all South Slavs together.
Habsburg Empire. Indeed, with the rising interest of the ruling elites to engage in active roles their citizen-subjects in a new political entity, the new emerging vernaculars started slowly replacing Latin as an official language of Hungary, and therefore, also Croatia. The only way of confronting and resisting Magaryzation of Croatia was to create an equal but opposite national program. This was carried on by the early Illyrian movement in which humanist and writer Ljudevit Gaj played a leading role. In this early phase of the Illyrian movement (from 1830 to 1840) Gaj was looking primarily for the ways to foster the cultural integration of disunited Croatian lands and its people. Secondarily, he also wanted to stimulate wider South Slav integration. The creation of a common language was seen as the very first stone of the edifice. It would become an expression of new cultural and national consciences for all South Slavs.  

Croatian plural cultural identity was reflected in its unique language situation. The Croats were speaking three dialects, kajkavski (kajkavian), cakavski (chakavian) and stokavski (stokavian), reflecting Croatia’s unique regional differences. While the chakavian dialect, as the oldest one, was in decline, the kajkavian dialect was well established, with a considerable body of literature supporting it. Yet, its disadvantage was limited extent of the territory on which it was spoken. The stokavian area was considerably larger, and its presence was well established especially in the works of already renowned poets and writers from Dubrovnik and Dalmatia. Stokavian was also spoken by overwhelming majority of Bosnian Croats and Croatian Serbs. Illyrians were careful to avoid any divisions within their fragile nation.

The stokavian zone covered large part of Croatia, the whole of Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro. This prompted Gaj to give up the kajkavian dialect in his writings and adopt stokavian, firmly believing that in this way the cultural unity of Croatians and the South Slavs can be achieved on stokavian basis.  

Gaj was backed by his contemporaries,

---

40 The Illyrians based their policy on the tradition of Croatian state right. They argued unification of Dalmatia with Slavonia and Croatia proper, and demanded a high degree of autonomy within Hungarian borders. The most important work was done on systematization of the Croatian language. In 1842 the Matica Ilirska (Illyrian Bee) was founded as a central cultural institution. When in 1843 Vienna banned the word “Illyrian” in Croatia, it was re-named the Matica Hrvatska (Croatian Bee). The Hungarians were also alarmed by emergence of the Illyrians. Hungarian parliament declared that within six years Hungarian should become the official language in Croatia. Goldstein, Croatia, A History, pp.63-65. Also see Udovicki “The Bonds and the Fault Lines”, p.20.

41 Banac argues: “The self-denying step of kajkavian Croats was in many ways a unique gesture in the history of nineteenth century national movements, and was possible only in the context of tolerant
especially by Count Janko Draskovic, who in his famous work the “Dissertation”, in 1832, in addition to the demands for reform of the feudal system, argued for an independent Croatian government and the introduction of the stokavian dialect as the official language. The Croatian Sabor passed Draskovic’s program making it the official program of the Croatian political elite. The Illyrian movement developed into the Croatian National Revival movement and helped in building the modern nation.

On the Serbian side Illyrianism created more enemies than friends, as many were afraid that Gaj’s reformed Latin script for stokavian, could compete for the primacy with a Cyrillic alphabet used by Serbs and considered to be the only truly Slavic script. Yet, Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic, a famous language reformer, successfully reformed the Serbian language by elevating the stokavian dialect of the Serb population of Eastern Herzegovina to the status of national literary language. He resisted the pressure from conservative elites to create such a language out of Church Slavonic. He also reformed the Cyrillic alphabet and introduced a simple spelling system, removing all obstacles to a wider literacy of the masses.

Karadzic not only successfully reformed the stokavian dialect but also considered all Slavs who spoke stokavian, regardless of religion and the territory they lived on, as Serbs. This assimilation through language, gave the Serbian modern national ideology a formidable weapon. Karadzic’s linguistic theories were in fact nothing new. As we can see from the example of German romanticism, these theories were widely accepted and circulated all over the Europe among the pioneers of national and language studies. According to those popular beliefs national language was the purest form of national spirit. The belief that one nation could have only one spirit, and not three as in the

---

42 He also advocated unification of all Croatian and Slovenian lands in a separate unit within the Hapsburg Empire. The future Illyrian kingdom would consist of united Croatia (on the base of Croatian state law), Slovenia (on the base of language similarity), and Bosnia (on the base of Croatia’s historic territory). Goldstein, *Croatia, A History*, pp.62-3. Yet as Jelavich argues the Croatian goals were above all to unite the Croatian lands into single political entity and integrate a large Serb minority (about 25% of population) in Croatian state, making the “Triune Kingdom” a political reality. The emphasis was always that these were Croatian lands were Serbs also lived: “Their language was the same, but the only political nation in the Kingdom was the Croatian.” Charles Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms-Textbooks and Yugoslav Union before 1914*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1990, p.264.
Croatian case, and that two nations could not share the same spirit, led Karadzic to his conclusion that all stokavian-speaking Slavs were in fact Serbs.43

The choice of stokavian dialect as a base for language standardisation, on the Croatian and Serbian side, created a foundation for the development of a unified Serbo-Croat literary language. In 1850, a conference was held in Vienna, and was attended by the major Slovenian, Croat and Serbian writers and linguists. They signed the so-called “Vienna Agreement” by which they declared that “the Serbs and the Croats were one people, and therefore, should have a single literature, which also requires a common literary language.”44 They also decided to use the existing stokavian dialect, spoken by the overwhelming majority of the South Slavs, as a basis for the standardisation of a common language, rather than creating a completely new language from a mixture of other existing dialects.45

The Serbs, the Croats and the Yugoslavs

Serbia was, not independent yet, but it was de facto free of Turkish rule after 1830. The First Serbian Uprising in 1804 and the Second Uprising of 1814, forced Ottomans to grant autonomy to Serbia in 1830, under the protection of Russia. Encouraged by actual independence and for the first time backed by a bigger and more powerful Orthodox brother, Serbian political elites started contemplating the plans for a final liberation and expansion of their state. Following Karadzic’s concept of linguistic nationhood, Ilija Garasanin defined the project of the Serbian national state in his work “Nacertanie” (The Memorandum) in 1848. He was the first one to delineate a program

---

43 Slovenian linguist led by famous Jernej Kopitar, who was Karadzic’s friend and mentor, used the same argument to see Croats who spoke the kajkavian dialect, because of its similarity to Slovenian as ethnic Slovenes, reducing in this way the ‘true’ territory of Croatia only to chakavian speaking areas. See Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.81.
45 The first Dictionary of the Croatian or Serbian Language appeared in 1880-82, and was prepared by the prominent Serbian philologist, Djuro Danicic. Interestingly enough Danicic himself was not a speaker of stokavian dialect. This only, as Wachtel suggests, reflects a genuine desire for the cooperation among South Slav intelligentsia: “As had been the case with Gay and the Illyrians, Danicic was willing to sacrifice his own linguistic habits for what he saw as the common good.” See Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, pp.28-9. See also, Matvejevic, Jugoslovenstvo danas, pp.121-2.
for a Great Serbia, a policy that would see the all Serbs scattered across Balkan Peninsula living in one state. Garasanin’s program was respectful of others who chose to live with them, but never outlined how to accommodate them. The Great Serbia policy rather emphasized the role of a strong expansionary and centralized state.

With the large population of Serbs living in Bosnia and Croatia (about two million, or thirty percent of all Serbs), Serbian political elites, now ruled by the Obrenovic dynasty and led by conservative Prime Minister Nikola Pasic, were more concerned with the incorporation of their scattered brothers through the expansion, than about the idea of unity of all South Slavs. In 1903, the Obrenovic dynasty was overthrown in a bloody internal coup d’etat and replaced by the Karadjordjevic dynasty. It was only after that, and Serbia’s subsequent territorial enlargement after the Balkan Wars, that Serbian political elites started calling for Pan-Slavic liberation from the Austro-Hungarian Empire with Serbia in the leading role. As we can see for already outlined historical reasons - especially the historical role of church and its large diasporas abroad - Serbs were forming a national consciousness while also defining their political platform. The Great Serbian policy marked Serbian political thought until World War II and would be resurrected again at the end of the 1980’s.

Reflecting their cultural diversity, Croatian early political discourse was divided between several factions. Ante Starcevic and Eugene Kvaternik produced a new national ideology that found itself on the opposite side of the political spectrum to the Illyrians. Starcevic affirming the Croatian state right saw this time the people as the bearers of that

---

46 Garasanin rather advocated expansion of Serbian state into Bosnia, Kosovo, and Montenegro as “traditional Serb lands”. He also advocated expansion into northern Albania in order to gain an exit to the Adriatic Sea. He had regular contacts with Strossmayer, Gaj and Jelacic, and at one point suggested unification of all South Slavs into one federal state. Yet he never explicitly designed the place for Croatia or Slovenia in that state. John Lampe argues that, in fact, despite of his intentions, his “implicit designation of an undefined subsidiary role for the Croats in some union with enlarged Serbia including Bosnia made Garasanin double vision a fatal flaw whenever twentieth-century politicians, Serb or Croat, applied it to either of the two Yugoslavias.” John R. Lampe, Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was the Country, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.52.

47 The importance of this ambiguous document for Great Serbian nationalism has often been overstated as it was often, in the hindsight, portrayed as ‘root of all evil’ in the Balkans. Yet, Garasanin’s plans were very much in the mainstream of European liberal thinking about the construction of nation state. It also has to be remembered that this text remained an internal document for more than fifty years. It was only published by a Belgrade journal in 1906, but by that time Serbia was free and increasingly self-confident country. On the other hand, as Jelavich argues there is no convincing evidence that that before 1914 the Serbian political elite tried to achieve anything else but the unification of all Serbs. Jelavich, South Slav Nationalisms, p.264.
right, instead of the Croatian nobility. Kvaternik, following liberal interpretations of the popular expansionistic theories, saw only two South Slavic nations on the Balkan Peninsula, the Croats and the Bulgars. In Great Croatia, only Croats resided. Serbs were seen as an “unclean race” and regarded only as the “Croats of Orthodox fate”; the large number of Serbs within Croatia’s historical borders would be addressed by forming an autocephalous Croatian Orthodox Church. Slovenes were considered only as Mountain Croats and Bosnian Muslims were of course only Islamicized Croats.48

Large number of intellectuals still stuck to the idea of Illyrians, which underwent a revival and second modified wave in 1860 under the name of Jugoslovjenstvo (Yugoslavism). Josip Juraj Strosmayer, a philanthropist and the Bishop of Djakovo, together with the most famous Croatian historian of that time Franjo Racki, founded the Yugoslav Academy in 1866. The main goal of the institution was cultural unification of the South Slavs, based on a common culture and literary language.49 At that time nobody could foretell the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Strossmayer and Racki saw the future for the Habsburg South Slavs within a federalized and decentralized Monarchy. For them the ultimate future goal was a federal South Slav state embracing Serbia and Montenegro: “The ultimate South Slavic union would be based on full equality of nationhood, overcoming the question of territorial proprietorship, which remained a visible expression of differences, between the Croat and the Serb national ideologies.”50

In 1867 the Habsburg Monarchy was divided in two, leaving Croatia-Slavonia in the Hungarian half. Under the new rule Croatian statehood was reduced to the bare minimum. This new wave of Magyarsation, coupled with an economic prosperity and the new foreign-educated generation of young Croats, gave a rise towards the end of the

48 Starcevic even went as far as to see Serbian royal Nemanjic dynasty as the “most ancient and most illustrious Croat family”. Kvaternik saw “Orthodox Croats” as the purest Croats because unlike Catholic Croats, they were not corrupted by Latin or German influences. Starcevic saw Bosnian Muslims in the same light, considering them as Croats by nationality and praising their elite as the “oldest and purest nobility in Europe” Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, pp.88-108.

49 Stossmayer’s great dream was reconciliation of the Roman and Eastern churches, and mending the schism that brought huge misfortunes to South Slavs. As a wealthy Catholic Bishop, he gave almost all of his fortune towards supporting unification. He supported every South Slav learned society –including the work of Karadzic and Danicic. The Yugoslav Academy of Art and Science brought together intellectuals and scholars from all Slavic lands and quickly established itself as the center of Croatia’s intellectual life. Branka Prpa-Jovanovic, “The Making of Yugoslavia: 1830-1945”, in Udovicki’s Burn This House, Duke University Press, London, 1997, p.44.

50 Banac The National Question in Yugoslavia 1984, p.91.
nineteenth century to a third option in Croatian political discourse. To resist further assimilation, the Croats had to rely upon the help from other Slavs more than ever before. The group of students from the University of Zagreb called Napredna Omladina (the Progressive Youth) combined and reconciled Strossmayer’s Yugoslavism with the Starcevic particularism, bringing for the first time a possible solution of the Croatian question outside the frame of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Led by Dalmatian journalists Frane Supilo and Ante Trumbic they reaffirmed Starcevic’s idea of Croatian statehood, but gave it a Yugoslav orientation by arguing that the new state should be based on cooperation and mutual respect of Croats and Serbs. The evident differences in a way the Croats and Serbs imagined future union were perceived as malleable and adjustable. For Croatians, the Yugoslav idea was a refuge from the aggressive assimilatory efforts by Austrians and Hungarians. However, they expected to be treated as equal partners in such a new community.

The Issue of Bosnia

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman yoke became unbearable for its Christian subjects. At the same time, Austria and Russia increasingly started acting as the patrons of the Christian population in Bosnia. This put pressure on a weakened Ottoman Sultanate to modernize its outdated administrative and legal system in Bosnia. Resistance to this idea came from local semi-independent Muslim lords, who did not want to give up their privileged status. They would have preferred an administrative autonomy for Bosnia and an end to reforms. Their resistance was eventually crushed and in 1839 it was announced that all subjects, regardless of religion, would be granted equal security of life and property. In 1855 the tax system was reformed with the abolishment of especially harsh poll-tax (harac), and many other changes were made to Janissary military service.

The loss of privilege brought the first signs that the attitude of the Bosnian Muslims had hardened towards both Orthodox and Catholic Christian congregations. The Ottoman Empire was in a state of disarray. Limited reforms could not stop the process of disintegration. The situation in Bosnia worsened in 1875 when angry Christian serfs rose
for the sixth time in a few years to protest rising taxes. Their uprisings were supported by Serbia, which increasingly saw Bosnia - with the Bosnian Orthodox population now a majority - as a Serbian land. Croatia also had an interest in Bosnia. In the late nineteenth century, eighteen percent of Bosnian population were Catholics. With Ottoman conquest, parts of Croatia had been incorporated in Bosnian territory (so-called Turkish Croatia). Although this area was rather small, it was big enough for the Croatian elite to formulate claims to the Bosnian territory, based upon Croatia’s historic right. Also by this time both Christian congregations - the Catholic and the Orthodox - mostly under the influence of strong intellectual elites in Belgrade and Zagreb, had undergone the process of gaining national consciousness and saw themselves increasingly as autonomous Croats and Serbs.

Many started advocating unification with Slavic Serbia. But Serbia was not the only one with interests in Bosnia. The Habsburg Empire was eager to expand at the expense of the Ottomans, and Russia had shown renewed interest for Balkans, backing Serbia. The Balkan movement initiated to drive the Ottomans from the Balkan Peninsula, with all its states participating, culminated in the 1876-78 with the Russo-Turkish war. Serbia was hoping not only to achieve independence but also to annex Bosnia in the process. Western political powers had their political interests at stake as well. German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck was concerned chiefly with preserving the political equilibrium of power in Europe and preventing the Russians from dominating the Bosphorus and therefore controlling access between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Last, but not least, he saw the possible Austrian occupation of Bosnia as the act that would put an end to the possibility of creating a large South Slav state, which would endanger German interests in the Balkans.

The Congress of Berlin, summoned right after the short war of 1878, dictated Bulgaria to return the territories it conquered from Turkey, while allowing Austria to occupy Bosnia. Right after the congress, almost three hundred thousand Austrian troops, made up from the Krajina’s Serbs and Croats occupied Bosnia, facing massive protests.

51 The large exodus of Catholics from Bosnia happened in 1697 when a Habsburg’s military commander, Prince Eugene of Savoy, after successfully defeating the Turks in southern Hungary, decided to continue his military offensive towards Sarajevo. After he took Sarajevo by surprise, he decided to withdraw after only two days, leaving behind only trail of destruction and plunder. Many Catholic have joined his army during its retreat, out of fear of reprisal. Malcolm, Bosnia: A Short History, pp.84-86.
and unrest among the local Muslim population. The conquest took almost three months and triggered a new wave of migration as many Turks and Bosnian Muslims (possibly more than 200 000) left for Constantinople fearing reprisals from Christians. In addition, this confirmed the new balance of ethnic predominance in Bosnia in favour of the Serbs that would last until after WWII. The treaty also partitioned the Bosnian province putting the part of southeastern Bosnia (the so-called Sandzak of Novi Pazar) under Turkish control, leaving a large part of the Bosnian Muslim population out of Bosnia. The goal was to drive a wedge between Serbia and Montenegro. It restored Macedonia and Kosovo back to Turkey, frustrating both the Serbs and Bulgars. At the same time, in 1881 the Military Frontier was finally dissolved and incorporated back into Croatia. This action took away all the privileges given to Serbs, which had been granted to them when the Frontier was an active bulwark against the Ottomans. All this was done in a long tradition of “divide and rule” politics so it increased the animosity between local populations to advance the political goals of Austria, Hungary and Germany.\footnote{For instance the revolt of Orthodox peasants in Herzegovina was suppressed by a Habsburg military unit made up entirely of Croats.} The Berlin Congress also granted full independence to Serbia and Montenegro.

It should be underlined that once Bosnia was occupied (it was officially annexed only in 1908), Austria governed for almost forty years with great skill. During that time Bosnia-Herzegovina underwent radical transformation and made a giant leap from being a backward province on the periphery of archaic crumbling Empire, to being fully included into the modern European realm. Austria put significant resources into the Bosnian economy, developing industry, upgrading the road infrastructure and cities, and establishing a modern financial and economic system. The unique phenomenon that Ottoman rule had produced in Bosnia, a class of overwhelmingly Muslim landowners, a disaster waiting to happen, even the pragmatic Habsburgs would refuse to tackle.\footnote{Just before the war Orthodox population composed 43.49 percent of total population of Bosnia, Muslims 32.25, and Catholics 22.87 percent. However, the land remained in the hands of begs (landlords), “90 percent of whom were Muslim, while eighty thousand out of ninety thousand Serb peasants remained landless as late as 1911” This caused peasants to remain poor, disappointed and deeply frustrated and potentially dangerous social group. See Banac The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.361.Also see Udovicki, “The Bonds and the Fault Lines” p.27 and p.44.} They were careful not to upset any of ingrained traditions, leaving most of the privileges of local Muslim population intact, including the Sharia law. The head of the administration

---

52 For instance the revolt of Orthodox peasants in Herzegovina was suppressed by a Habsburg military unit made up entirely of Croats.
53 Just before the war Orthodox population composed 43.49 percent of total population of Bosnia, Muslims 32.25, and Catholics 22.87 percent. However, the land remained in the hands of begs (landlords), “90 percent of whom were Muslim, while eighty thousand out of ninety thousand Serb peasants remained landless as late as 1911” This caused peasants to remain poor, disappointed and deeply frustrated and potentially dangerous social group. See Banac The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.361.Also see Udovicki, “The Bonds and the Fault Lines” p.27 and p.44.
in Bosnia, Benjamin Kallay tried to preserve sensitivity towards the Bosnian cultural identity that existed for centuries, and encourage its definition in national terms. But his project of *Bosnjastvo*, promoting loyalty to Bosnia as a whole, and promotion of single Bosnian nationhood, was simply too late. Movements towards separate national identification among Croats and Serbs, supported by their educated classes in Zagreb and Belgrade, had already turned the corner, and could not be reversed. Kallay, of course, had Austria’s interests before his eyes. He was fully aware that existence of Serbian and Croatian nationalism could have endangered the Habsburg’s interests in Bosnia and the Balkans.

The formation of a third separate identity - that of the Bosnian Muslims - would be concluded in the first decades of twentieth century. After the demise of the medieval Bosnian state, Bosnian Franciscans remained the only custodians of its historic memory. Bosnian Muslim identity stemmed rather from their religious affiliation, a fact always stressed by the Serbian and Croat national ideologues in the hope of undermining their claim for a separate national identity. For a while, the disunited Muslim community played both sides in attempting to resist and counterbalance emerging Serbian and Croatian nationalistic movements, and to repel their parallel assimilatory efforts. However, by the end of first decade of the twentieth century, the process of Bosnian Muslim ethnic formation was almost finished. In the words of the influential mayor of Sarajevo during Austrian rule, Mehmedbeg Kapetanovic Ljubusak: “We shall never deny that we belong to the South Slav family, but we shall remain Bosniaks like our forebears and nothing else.”

It must be underlined that Bosnians of all denominations always kept their distinct identity referring to themselves simply as *Bosanci (Bosnians)* until the late nineteenth century: “While ethnicity among Bosnians in the nineteenth century was very much rooted in religious tradition and practice, “identity” was complex blend of religious affiliation and conviction, cultural practices, socio-economic status, and loyalty to one’s place of birth or hometown.” Whatever tensions and animosities did exist, they were counteracted by tolerance that was developed slowly through the cultural exchange of

---

55 Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*, p.84.
daily life and uninterrupted religious and ethnical coexistence that had lasted for centuries. As all authors agree, it is impossible to find any significant evidence of deep ancient hatred before the late nineteenth century. To be sure, there was a significant discontent of mostly Orthodox peasant population, stemming from an outdated agrarian system in desperate need of reform. As we already described there was a huge difference in the social and legal status between the Muslim population and their Christian subjects.

Yet, only after the concept of nation appeared on the historical horizon, these essentially social and class grievances could be given national connotations and interpreted in a radically different way. Until the end of the nineteenth-century, three communities were naming themselves by religious rather then ethnic names. The stratification of society along the lines of religious affiliation, as implemented by Ottoman ‘millet’ system, contributed significantly to the future division of Bosnian society. Such defined lines of separation were deeply ingrained because they persisted for several centuries. The tectonic social changes at the end of the nineteenth century, the newly emerging class of the bourgeoisie and their foreign educated children, modern European ideas of nationhood, the modern administration and school system established by Austria, the network of schoolteachers, newspaper readers, literary and cultural societies (ethnically based, and backed by official Belgrade and Zagreb with their strong intellectual elites) all combined to finish that process. They defined those fault lines in a historically-novel language of nationalism.

The issue of Bosnia would worsen the confrontation between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. Serbia after being involved into two Balkan Wars (1912-1913), after the tremendous loses and destruction it suffered, was not looking for a showdown with the Habsburgs. Austria was nervous that an increasingly powerful and self-confident Serbia

---

57 The First Balkan War was launched by the Balkan League (Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro) to correct the decisions of Berlin Congress by force. In this war Serbia captured the Sandzak and Kosovo. In the Second Balkan War, Serbia and Greece united to fight Bulgaria in order to partition Macedonia. After Bulgaria was defeated, Greece took Aegean Macedonia, while Serbia received Vardar Macedonia. Bulgaria ended up with smallest part of Pirin Macedonia. In 1913 at the London conference the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia) granted Kosovo back to Serbia. Yet, as Udovicki explains, that had nothing to do with Serbian dreams and myths about the return of ancestral lands, but rather to the Entente’s effort to destabilize Albania, an Austrian client state. Udovicki, “The Bonds and the Fault Lines”, p.30.
could, in the eyes of its own Slavic subjects, spark a flame of desire for their own independence. When Gavrilo Princip, a member of the student organization Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia), assassinated the Habsburg crown prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sofia, in Sarajevo on June 28.1914, the Habsburgs were provided with convenient excuse to settle the score with Serbia. 58 Although the historical evidence does not support the Habsburg’s claims that Serbia stood behind the assassination, Princip’s shots would not only push Serbia in a war that it did not want, but plunge the whole world in a catastrophe never seen before. 59 After the war the South Slavs found themselves in a drastically changed political and social environment.

To recapitulate this chapter, the encounter between the age of Modernity and political and social reality of the Balkans produced some paradoxical results. At the end of the nineteenth century the area inhabited by various South Slav tribes was already crisscrossed with multiple fault lines, most of whom were the product of a historical accident rather than a product of their own making. The early split in Christendom and subsequent Ottoman conquest would draw the first lines of division between these tribes. The second crack had arisen from different experiences produced by the first state building experiences of the early medieval period. And finally the third and the most decisive fissure stemmed from a protracted period of acculturation these tribes were exposed to during centuries of foreign rule. The legacies of the time spent under foreign

58 Young Bosnia was a student organization that was consisted of students with mostly Serbian background, but included some Croat and Muslim members as well. It belonged to a network of similar student organizations that existed in other South Slav countries as Popular-Radical Youth in Slovenia and the Progressive Youth in Croatia. They were often called with a common name Nacionalistica Omladina (Nationalistic Youth). None of these groups had a firm ideology, clearly defined goals or organized structure. The lowest common denominator could be defined as liberation of Austrian rule and the unification of all South Slav lands. In the words of Ferdinand’s assassin, Gavrilo Princip, from his trial: “I am Yugoslav nationalist, aiming for the unification of all Yugoslavs, and I do not care what form or state, but it must be free of Austria.” Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, p.153. Also, Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.101.

59 There is some evidence that members of Young Bosnia sought and got some training and help through private contact with the Serbia’s Military Intelligence but it is clear that the Serbian government did not stand behind the assassination. Malcolm concludes that even Austria did not want a war, because it did not know what to do with another large Slavic country even if it conquers it. Serbia on the other hand coveted Bosnia but fully understood that it could not take on Austria-Hungary by itself. The real architects of war proved to be Germans who wanted to curb the growing power of Russia. Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, pp.156-7.
conquerors produced the differences that slowly became visible not only in the realm of the high culture - that was influenced by Rome or Constantinople, and latter on Vienna and Istanbul - but also within the domain of the lower culture, permeated by habits and customs of everyday life. Last, but not least, many decisions and actions taken by the foreign powers pursuing their own interests - such as the formation of the Military Frontier - increased tensions and cemented a cultural gap between them: “The same ethnic pride and resilience that helped each group retain its identity within the Ottoman or the Habsburg Empire turned out to be the most formidable obstacle to their twentieth-century pan-Slavic unification.”

During the period between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century the Industrial revolution and Enlightenment had shifted patterns of territorial organization in Europe. European political elites, consisting of a vanishing aristocracy and an emerging bourgeoisie class, propelled by the political economy of capitalism and new technologies in the fields of production, communication and transportation found a common interest in the political homogenization of - up to that moment - ethically, religiously and linguistically heterogeneous political space. The modernizing ideology of nationalism enabled the emergence of the nation-state to be the dominant form of political and territorial organization.

The process of building a homogenized political space for the nation-state and constructing its imagined community met many challenges across the European continent. In their efforts to adopt modernizing ideologies and novel state building techniques the makers of the Yugoslav imagined community faced even more numerous obstacles. Here, the reconceptualisation of the political space in national terms had clashed with extreme social and ethnic diversity of the South Slav mix. Moreover, the process of catching up with the rest of Western Europe was determined by the political circumstances of the nineteenth century Balkans. Those conditions were dictated by centuries of foreign rule, which caused political struggle to be aimed exclusively at overthrowing the foreign yoke: “Precisely because the bottom-line issue in the Balkans was foreign domination - and not the overthrow, as in Western Europe, of the arbitrary authority of the state and church in favor of a free and independent individual - the

---

nineteenth-century struggle in the Balkans remained, in geopolitical terms, a pre-modern struggle.\textsuperscript{61}

The Ottoman parts of the then-future Yugoslavia experienced a significant delay in development in comparison with its Habsburg lands. Among them, the most populous and most significant political actor in Balkan affairs, Serbia, spent four centuries in a struggle to get rid of Turkish domination. During this time it was cut from the developmental path of Western Europe, missing the Renaissance and the Reformation completely and consequently entering the period of Enlightenment and the Industrial revolution late.\textsuperscript{62} As a result the liberal ideas of Enlightenment never took a hold in Serbia. Up to the last moment before unification its conservative political elite saw a resurrection and expansion of the Serbian state as their primary goal. The Yugoslav idea was forged by the Croat intellectual elite, yet embraced by its political leaders mostly out of the need to rely on their Slavic kin in order to resist the imperial assimilation imposed by the mighty Habsburg Empire.

Intellectual elites on both sides, riding on the wave of popular national-romantic theories of Pan-Slavism, believed that a common origin and language similarities could provide the framework for future unification. They worked tirelessly on their goal but grossly underestimated fissures underlying the foundation of a future union. Yugoslavia was an accident that happened at the beginning of the twentieth century, an aftermath of the reordering of the world order emerging on the vestiges of pre-modern Europe. Ironically reconceptualisation of the political space along the liberal ideals of the age of the Enlightenment, especially the novel idea of a homogenous nation-state, would clash with the demographic, social, and political realities of the diverse Balkan lands, putting the now-distinct South Slav tribes on a path towards collision for the first time in history.

\textsuperscript{61} Udovicki, \textit{Burn This House}, p.5.

\textsuperscript{62} There are some who argue against the theory of delayed development in Balkans, arguing that there is no universal pattern of development of different societies. In the first hundred and fifty years of their rule, the Ottomans brought the progress to the Balkan region. Yet, from the beginning of the seventeenth-century the Empire had begun its long decline, which was reflected first in its peripheries and the most distant frontier against the West. Constant turmoil caused a significant time-lag in terms of the economic and cultural development of Yugoslavian lands under Ottoman control, in comparison to Yugoslavian lands under the rule of Habsburgs. This fault line proved to have a significant impact to the process of future South Slav unification. Udovicki, \textit{Burn This House}, p.5.
The rise of Yugoslavia, as demonstrated in the previous chapter was a complicated and protracted affair. The so-called First Yugoslavia was born in the confusion and chaos of the First World War. Although unification hopes were high on every side, the diverse national intelligentsias had very different expectations of what the long awaited unification should bring them. As will be shown in this chapter, the formation of the first common state was seriously flawed, further complicating the relationships between these ethnically similar, but culturally very different groups of people. The two brief decades of the interwar period would prove to be crucial for the common future. They would be characterized by efforts to reconcile and connect not only the different economic, social and legal infrastructure of the former Habsburg and Ottoman lands, but also to tie different cultural legacies. The first decade would be also marked by a failed effort to create a unitary Yugoslav culture, and a supra-ethnic identity. The different approaches in achieving these goals would leave a deep trauma in the relationship of the Yugoslav communities, as the state building process had begun on the wrong foot, generating the overture for the bloody conflict of the Second World War. All the positive energy and effort of the fifty years before unification would be quickly spent. The dream of unification, as the final stage in the liberation from foreign occupation, would soon turn into a nightmare for all constituent parts, as a result of the fierce power struggle of the political elites for primacy in the new state. The beginning of Yugoslavia’s creation would hold the very seeds of its destruction.1

The Great War and Unification

The World War I was bloody affair in which all Yugoslav territories were involved and greatly suffered. Among them, Serbia perhaps endured the most. Its army, faced with a formidable and overpowering enemy fought heroically and suffered

---

1 Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, pp.126-7.
immensely. Among the foreign armies that invaded its territory, for the first time the Serbs were fighting their own ethnic kin, mobilized within the Habsburg forces. Today, this might sound as a paradoxical situation, but at that time while the nation as a concept was still in its infancy, this situation was considered as relatively normal. The Croats and the Serbs, as well as the Bosnian Muslims, from the Habsburg provinces were simply conscripted in the Monarchy’s forces, and did not have much choice but to become part of the army that attacked Serbia.\(^2\) Serbian armies held their fort for awhile, and than had to retreat in front of the overwhelming supremacy of the Central powers. Soon afterwards Serbia was occupied by Austria. Its army conducted an epic retreat through the Southern Serbia and Albania, being decimated by the cold winter and constant attacks by Austrian, German and Bulgarian troops. They regrouped on the Greek Island of Corfu. From there, in 1917, they joined the Allies (mostly French troops) on the Salonica front, from where they fought their way back to the liberation of Belgrade and the whole country.\(^3\) At the end of the war, the Serbian Army, whose ranks by now had swollen to 400,000, was a formidable force, and became indirectly a decisive factor in the creation of the new state.

The outline of the new country was drafted in 1917, on the island of Corfu where Serbian government led by Nikola Pasic and the Yugoslav Committee, led by Ante Trumbic and Frano Supilo, signed the Corfu Declaration. They outlined the look of the future common state and defined the basic principles for unification. Just before that, on one of his international visits, Trumbic discovered that Italy had signed a secret deal with the Allies, a common practice in those days, through which as compensation for participation in the war, it was promised the territory of Istria and the entire Dalmatian coast. At the same time, a leading Slovenian politician Antun Korosec formed the multi-party Yugoslav National Council, which promoted Slovenian support for the South Slavic

\(^2\) The South Slav contingent composed 17 percent of total Monarchy’s military forces and paid a terrible price in blood. The Croat contingent lost 300,000 men by 1918. Proportionally the largest number of casualties was suffered by the Bosnian Muslims and the Slovenes. Only the Bosnian Serbs served under special restrictions on the Russian and Serbian fronts, and they defected in large numbers. Lampe Yugoslavia as History, p.105.

\(^3\) Loses on the Serbian side were even more staggering: 300,000 military casualties (this has to be put in perspective that pre war Austria-Hungary population was 8 million, versus 3 million for Serbia). In addition there were 1.5 million civilian deaths from disease, starvation and deportation to concentration camps. By the end of the war, Serbia lost half of its male population between 18 and 55 years. Furthermore, retreating German and Austrian troops flooded every mine, and blew up every bridge and rail line in the country. In a final act of punishment Austrian troops broke every window and lock in Belgrade and blew up its electrical utility. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.107.
union. In the new union, the Croats and Slovenes were expecting not only a protection of their territories, but also to be treated in every matter as equal partners.⁴

However, the Corfu agreement was not achieved in a good will on Serbian side. Their conservative political elites, led by the old-fashioned Nikola Pasic saw the unequal position from which the different factions were entering negotiations as an opportunity to preserve the upper hand in a future state.⁵ Serbia might have been devastated by the war, but for several decades she had enjoyed an image of a free country with full statehood. As a member of the winning coalition, at the peak of its glory and prestige, Serbia saw itself in the same role played by Piedmont in the unification of Italy, as the leader around which other South Slavs should gather. It was now backed and inspired by a new powerful ally - France. In addition, that made the political elite to see the future union as a highly centralized state, conveniently forgetting that the South Slav state of affairs was quite different from France’s. In short the Serbian political elite saw the new edifice as a simple extension of the Serbian state, a prize awarded for their suffering and victory in the war.

Croats and Slovenes, on the other hand, had very different ideas about the character of the new state. Most Croats did not share any enthusiasm for the unitary state that the Serbs advocated. But amidst the chaotic circumstances at the end of the war, with a large Serb minority that advocated unification with Serbia, and Italy, one of the victors in the war, making aggressive claims on Croatian territory, unification with Serbia seemed as the lesser of many evils. Support for the union was much greater in Dalmatia, facing a more direct Italian threat than in the rest of Croatia. In the post-war collapse of Austria-Hungary, the Serbian Army was the lone factor that could enforce law and order on the territories of the new country, especially in Croatia and Slovenia that were plunged in the post-war chaos and civil unrest. Many Croat soldiers who were returning from the Russian front, the so-called ‘green cadres’, plundered not only the estates of the nobles

⁴ On the creation of the Yugoslav Committee and Trumbic’s and Supilo’s work, see Ivan Mestrovic, Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 1993, pp. 42-61.
⁵ Pasic formed his political personality during Serbia’s long struggle for independence; he never learned the experience of coalition politics. He was seventy-five years old when Yugoslavia was formed. Despite of his introverted personality, he was immensely popular with the Serbian masses. He earned a reputation of a secretive and sly politician, constantly maneuvering behind the scenes. Despite the fact that he never won any support of non-Serbs, and little of Serbs outside Serbia, he formed ten governments and remained a dominant figure on the Yugoslavian scene between the two wars. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.52.
but also the property of the ordinary people. Even more important, the Serbian military was the only factor able to deter Italy that was already putting its aggressive claims on Slovenian and Croatian territory into practice. Stuck between a rock and a hard place, amid the postwar chaos of the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire, Croatian and Slovenian politicians decided to come to Belgrade and sign the declaration on unification, essentially on Serbian terms. The new union was proclaimed on December 1, 1918, in front of the Croatian and Slovene and Bosnian politicians who for this occasion had formed the ad hoc body called Narodno Vijece (National Council). It was designed as a constitutional parliamentary monarchy, ruled from Belgrade by the house of Karadjordjevic, and was named The Kingdom of Serbs Croats Slovenes.

Next year at the Versailles Conference in Paris, marking the end of the World War I, the winning powers, France, England and the United States, pressed to deal with the issue of states emerging from the ruins of the two fallen Empires, recognized Yugoslavia. It was done mostly on the insistence of France, which wanted a strong ally in that region to counterbalance the influence of its traditional rival Italy. British and Americans were rather uneasy to accept the dissolution of Austra-Hungary, despite Wilson’s famous Fourteen Points Policy that, among other things, promoted self-determination for every nation wishing to determine its own political future. Yugoslavia had formed itself on the ground and the Versailles peacemakers have only recognized it.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes

After the initial two years of chaos and early political wrangling for power, the first constitution of the new country was proclaimed, not by chance, but rather

---

6 Italian troops were already advancing on Ljubljana and had occupied the towns of Pula, Rijeka, Zadar and Sibenik. They did not stop at coastal cities, but penetrated deep inland taking the city of Knin. Goldstein, Croatia, A History, p.111.
7 The National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was formed on October 6, in Zagreb, and National council of Bosnia on October 26, in Sarajevo. They passed series of decrees that officially broke off all relations with Austria-Hungary, and on October 28 proclaimed The State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. The state referred to all the South Slav territories of the former Austro-Hungary. The state, theoretically, according to Wilson’s principles, could opt to remain independent, but in practice there was not even a remote chance for obtaining an international recognition, or to exercise sovereignty within its borders. See Goldstein, Croatia, A History, p.111.
symbolically, on St. Vitus Day, June 28, 1921. The supreme law of the country described Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in picturesque but unrealistic way as “three tribes of the single nation”. The Bosnian Muslims were recognized as a religious entity, yet denied separate nationhood. All others, that were a part of it, were left out.

From the very beginning it became obvious that the new state has started its existence on the wrong foot. The country was supposed to emulate all the principles of modern European political life. It was defined as a parliamentary, constitutional monarchy with a limited role for the Monarch. It was supposed to guarantee private property and equality under the law for all of its citizens, freedom of political action, freedom of the press and religion. Quoting the compromise that Serbs and Croats negotiated before the Corfu declaration, and secured through Pasic’s constant maneuvering behind the scenes, the Constitution was adopted by simple - instead of two-thirds - majority bringing to life a highly centralized state. This opened the door to Serbian domination, bringing quickly with it the disappointment and dissatisfaction of all others. As Irvine argues Serbian national ideology and recent experience in the building of the Serbian state prevented them from seeing the new state as anything but a strong unitary state and made them blind to demands of Yugoslavia’s other national groups. Prpa-Jovanovic agrees: “The leading principle of the European liberal world - that of ‘one man-one vote’, as promised in the constitution - abstractly represented progress. In the political practice of the multiethnic kingdom, however it enabled the most numerous nation - the Serbs - to outvote and dominate the others.”

The situation on the ground did not help the new state either. The Serbian Army had maintained order in the new territories since the end of the war, playing the role of a civil police force. However, it was not trained for that mission and not attuned to

---

9 This was, of course, anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. Pasic’s Radical party portrayed the Serbian victory in the war, and the formation of the new country in the light of the resurrected Kosovo myth. The imaginary loss on the Field of Blackbirds five hundred years before was finally avenged, as Kosovo and all other territories were Serbs lived were lastly reunited with mother Serbia.

10 The Macedonians were considered as South Serbs, since Macedonia became part of Serbia after the Balkan Wars. Montenegrins, who have split political personality, were also seen as Serbs, as a large part of Montenegrins always considered themselves to be ethnic Serbs. On the eve of unification their parliament was maneuvered behind the scenes to abolish its separate statehood, and to incorporate into Serbian state. Large Albanian, Hungarian and German minorities were simply ignored. In Vojvodina significant Hungarian and German minorities were denied the vote in the first election. See Cirkovic, The Serbs, p.259.

the needs of local population, who saw it rather as an occupying power. Serbian laws
were extended to the rest of the county, while the extensive and efficient Austro-
Hungarian bureaucratic system that had been in place, was dismantled, since it was
perceived as something that belonged to the enemy. In 1919 military courts were given
jurisdiction over a wide range of civil cases. The military was also used to carry searches
and arrests, which contributed to the force’s further alienation from the population.
Furthermore many members of the Serbian army, especially in Bosnia, saw this newly
acquired power as an opportunity for revenge against the Muslim population, resulting in
a large number of abuses. Muslims, equated with Turks, were seen as a long time
occupiers and enemies responsible for the Serb suffering. For the duration of the state’s
existence, the Army remained firmly in the King’s hands and had a distinctively Serbian
caracter.\textsuperscript{12}

Socio-economic Divisions

The state faced huge obstacles in its initial process of integrating different
political and economic systems, as well as the varied cultural traditions of its constitutive
parts. Its existence also has to be seen against the wider background. In most of Europe
the interwar period failed to produce a significant economic development. It was mostly
spent by European powers in a preparation for the ‘correction of injustices’ that the end
of the first war had produced. Also, in the late twenties, the Great Depression hit the
whole world hard, devastating country’s mostly agricultural economy and its financial
infrastructure, further impeding chances for a normal economic development.\textsuperscript{13} The
young country simply did not have the time to eradicate significant differences and
obstacles that created during a long period of historical separation.\textsuperscript{14} A task such as this

\textsuperscript{12} See Banac, \textit{The National Question in Yugoslavia}, pp.141-151.
\textsuperscript{13} The young kingdom was the second most indebted country in Europe. Its public debt stood at 25 billion
dinars in 1925, only to almost double in the next ten years. In addition 75\% of the population was
employed in the agricultural sector. See Ramet, \textit{The Three Yugoslavias}, p.76.
\textsuperscript{14} The degree of socio-economic differences as a result of different cultural development is perhaps best
reflected in rates of literacy within the same nation. More the half the man and woman among the Serbs in
Vojvodina (former Hungarian territories) were literate by the beginning of the twentieth century. In Serbia
proper (former Ottoman territories) 79 percent of the population was illiterate (including over 90 percent of
would certainly have proven daunting even for more experienced and rational politicians, operating in a less politically poisoned atmosphere.

Initially the new state had to deal with the circulation of four different currencies, six different legal regimes, as well as different tax systems, which would remain in effect as such, for another decade. It inherited a poorly developed road infrastructure, including four different railroad systems. Its newly unified parts did not have developed economic ties and its diverse population had almost no knowledge of each other.\textsuperscript{15} Serbia and Montenegro were predominantly agrarian, while Slovenia and Croatia’s economies were more industrially developed. The union failed to bridge these differences; in fact they became even bigger with time. Zagreb quickly became a center of commerce and finance of the new country, and emerged as the economic and cultural rival of Belgrade.\textsuperscript{16} The Serbian elite tried to realize its political upper hand by dominating the economic field. This was mostly done through the taxation as the former Austro-Hungarian territories continued to pay higher taxes: “Hence, Croatians and Slovenes expected their economic position to win them political authority, while Serbs expected their political authority to strengthen their economic position, mainly through the power of taxation. Disparities in economic and political power were dramatic: according to one calculation, Serbia accounted for a mere one-fourth of Yugoslav capital, but its representatives made up three fourths of government personnel.”\textsuperscript{17}

In the atmosphere of distrust and mutual hostility, sparked by the centralist constitution and Serbian dominance, every issue that was supposed to be a matter of

\textsuperscript{15} Jelavich studied schoolbooks and school curricula of unifying territories before unification. He concludes that a new state was lacking a solid base on which it could be created. The textbooks of all unifying parts, even as late as 1914, did not offer any information about the other nations or contain knowledge that would enable students to learn more about one another, as the basis for better understanding. Slovenians, who offered information about both the Croats and the Serbs, did the best job. The Croatian books offered almost no information about Slovenes, but basic facts abut Serbian history. The Serbian books offered no information about the other South Slavs. Jelavich, \textit{South Slav Nationalisms}, p.273.

\textsuperscript{16} Zagreb became the largest industrial and import center in the new country. Its industrial output advantage over Belgrade was striking, 22.5 versus 5.4 percent of the country’s total. This was expected aftermath of the pre war economic ties developed under the Austro-Hungarian rule, which simply continued slightly modified after the war. Many Czech, Hungarian and Austrian businessman made their home in Zagreb, lured by the prospect of investing in an underdeveloped country. The major sources of support for Croatian industry were Zagreb’s large commercial banks that attracted massive influx of foreign capital. This was interesting turn of their prewar roles, as the Belgrade banks became tied and controlled by political center, and abandoned their prewar entrepreneurial ways. By 1928, Zagreb banks accounted for full one-half of the bank assets in entire Yugoslavia. Lampe, \textit{Yugoslavia as History}, pp.148-9.

\textsuperscript{17} Prpa-Jovanovic, “The Making of Yugoslavia”, p.54.
rational debate was soon translated into the language of nationalism. Slovenes and Croats, who saw themselves more qualified to lead the new country, started accusing Serbs of dominating and exploiting them. Serbs, who continually recalled their victory in the war and expounded the unquestionable suffering of their army in the liberation of other Slavs, perceived the other side as uncommitted to the new state and irreparably inclined towards separatism. As one side dominated and tried to further realize the agenda of centralism, the other - out of the resentment and frustration - tried to block any political process. While the Croats perceived themselves as subjugated victim of the unification, the Serbs accused them of lack of enthusiasm, serious commitment, and loyalty to the new state. In the atmosphere of the distrust, constant argument and bickering, the parliamentary life was in a state of perpetual crisis, and hardly any of the urgent reforms could be enacted. The underlying national question simply paralysed everything else.

The Centralists, the Unitarists and the Hard Opposition

The main obstacle on the path to forging a unified country was the outdated political elite and their political parties, which by their very political views and methods, truly belonged to the past century. This was coupled with the terribly mismatched personalities of the three main political leaders. Serbian political discourse was divided between the two large, influential parties, and several smaller ones. Most influential parties offered relatively similar views regarding the nature of the state, promoting in different ways the Serbian dominance within it. Several smaller ones advocated pro-Yugoslav agenda and the accommodation of others, but they remained largely uninfluential, and were relegated to the margins of the political life.

Nikola Pasic’s Radical party was the party with a long tradition, which provided all encompassing ideology acceptable to wide strata of Serbian society, based on the policy of a Great Serbia.\[18\] It was an outdated policy, but deeply rooted in popular

\[18\] Pasic’s Radicals, the strongest political party in Serbia, at first presented themselves as a party of Serbia’s peasants who felt increasingly alienated from the emerging bourgeois state. Yet, in practice the
imagination as it was forged during the century of Serbian struggle for liberation. For Pasic and the Radicals, Serbia’s leading role in the new state was expected and natural, as ‘stronger’ Serb element was perceived superior to the ‘weaker’ Croat and Slovenes. Unlike their main rivals, the Democrats, they were not interested in the creation of one hybrid Yugoslav nationality, but rather interested in *serbianisation* of Yugoslavia’s other nationalities. Pasic argued that Serbia has been already a state for a certain period of time and therefore “cannot be on equal footing with the other, previously incomplete state-right formations.”19 Radicals, although ardent proponents of centralism were not opposed to different federal arrangements in order to accommodate disillusioned Slovenes and Croats. Yet, in this case, they stressed that Serbs everywhere wanted to be united with Serbia proper, which discretely implied that any case of redrawing of Yugoslavia’s internal borders in order to establish federal units, would mean that the large Serb minorities in Bosnia and Croatia would want to join the Serbian federal unit. Any move that would put the Serbs scattered anywhere outside of the Serbia proper, in the position of minority in a non-Serb federal unit was firmly rejected.20

The role of scattered Serb minorities dominated the second political option in Serbian discourse. Democrats were led by a contradictory figure of Svetozar Pribicevic, a Serb from the Croatia’s former Military Frontier. Pribicevic and his followers were advocates of *unitarism*, promoting a strong and unitary state.21 He argued for the principle of basic equality between Croats and Serbs, hoping to forge a hybrid nation out

---

21 Pribicevic formed the party with a moderate Serbian politician and leader of the pre-war Independent Radicals, Ljuba Davidovic. Davidovic’s stronghold was urbane Belgrade, but he hoped to form a Yugoslavia-wide party, uniting all the Liberal parties in Yugoslavia. That is why he sought Pribicevic’s constituency of mostly Croatian and Bosnian Serbs. In 1925 Pribicevic split from Davidovic and moved closer to Pasic’s Radicals and their position of Serbian supremacy. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, pp.130-3.
of them. According to him, the existing differences between them should be abolished, as they only contributed to the feeling of individuality and therefore separateness and differentiation.  

Pribicevic’s struggle fully articulated the position of his community, the Croatian Serbs. The manifestation of nationalism and their exposure to Serb national consciousness would bring only more trouble to this already claustrophobic community that was analyzed in a previous chapter. Croatians interested above all in maintaining the territorial integrity of their multi-polar and fragile lands, would deny Serbs a separate “political nation” within its borders. Yet, the Serbs firmly rejected the status of “political Croats”, and sought a protection of their interests in a highly centralized state with unitaristic conception. Through the full national integration they hoped that Croatian nationalistic element would be neutralized and even eliminated.  

Pribicevic’s main goal was political emancipation of the large Serbian minority in Croatia. His career and his political struggle of “vulgar unitarism” were determined by his place of origin and the fate of his community. After the unification, he was despised by the Croats as someone who destroyed their statehood, yet was sacrificed by the Radicals who had forsaken him for a brief coalition with the Croat Radic. In 1927, Pribicevic had turned towards Radic. Together they forged Peasant-Democratic Coalition that would last until Radic’s assassination. That sharp turn of events perhaps depicts all the turbulence and frequent convulsions in the country’s parliamentary life. He became a fierce critique of Serbian nationalism and later of King Alexander’s autocracy and started advocating more independence for Croatia. As a result he was exiled to Paris and then to Prague, where he died a bitter man. But his real community

---

22 Pribicevic argued that all signs of national individuality, which he saw as exclusive aftermath of foreign occupation should be erased, mostly through the work of Yugoslav intelligentsia. Yet, his motives were inconsistent and his logic twisted. While arguing for abolition of the office of the Croatian Ban, Pribicevic never applied the same logic to the institution of the King, or saw why it is being perceived in Croatia as a strictly Serbian institution. See Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, pp.170-188.

23 Svetozar’s brother Milan Pribicevic supported his work and his ideas. Despite heated rhetoric and work for a unitary state, they never encouraged secession of the Krajina from Croatia and its unification with Serbia. Although susceptible to Great Serbian propaganda, they knew that Great Serbia was unattainable on Croatia’s territory and that Serbs and Croats cannot be easily separated: “We live mixed with our Croat brothers from Zemun and Montenegro to Varazdin and Gorski Kotar. How can we separate ourselves from them within a Great Serbia? Those who teach us thusly, direct us to something that can never be, and even if it could, it would lead us to a Serbo-Croat massacre.” Milan Pribicevic as quoted in Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p.183.
prevailed over the imagined one. His words, although written in the late twenties precisely describe a tragic place of his community in a Serbo-Croat relationship yet to come: “After the war, Belgrade power holders always called upon the Serbs of Croatia for help when it was feignedly necessary to defend imperilled state unity or to fight against ‘Croat separatism’. But as soon as official Belgrade felt that it could profit from some sort of compromise with the Croats, it would sacrifice the Serbs of Croatia without hesitation and with merry heart, making them a red rag to the Croat eyes.”24

The main opposition to the centralism and unitarism was charismatic and competent leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, Stjepan Radic. At first, his constituency consisted only of Croatian peasants, but soon he captured not only votes of the most of Croatia, but also its popular imagination. His party grew into a movement and official opposition program, and completed the process of Croat national consolidation.25

Radic was fiercely critical of ideology of “national unity” even before the War, arguing that Croatia should not enter into union with Serbia. He rather proposed, and unsuccessfully lobbied the Versailles conference, for a full independence for Croatia. If that were unachievable, he would have rather see a union of the ‘Austrian’ South Slavs under the Austrian Crown. However, once Austria-Hungary disappeared and Yugoslavia was born, he turned into a fierce critic of Serbian unitarism and a main advocate of Croatia’s right to statehood. He argued for a confederal option, asking for Croats to be treated as equal partners, and have full rights to determine their political future. With large gains in the popular vote in the 1922 parliamentary election, especially in Dalmatia and Bosnia (Croatia proper was already united under Radic’s leadership) it was clear that Radic’s movement was a formidable opposition to a centralist option, and the force to be reckoned with: “For the first time in modern history an overwhelming majority of Croats was politically united behind the national leadership.”26

On the other hand his role was not as constructive as it could have been, since he spent most of the time heckling or simply boycotting the work of parliament, and lobbying foreign centers of power to support Croatia’s independence. Radic’s charismatic

24 Pribicevic as quoted in Banac The National Question in Yugoslavia, p.189. On Pribicevic’s exile in Paris and his critique of Serbian hegemony in the First Yugoslavia also see Mestrovic, Uspomene na policke ljude i dogadjaje, pp.204-207.
figure, his widespread popularity, complex personality and confrontational way of communication soon marked him as a main target of unitarist forces. He was arrested and imprisoned several times. He was killed in 1928 after a confrontation with a member of the Radical party during one of the heated sessions of parliament. Radic’s legacy was a solid opposition to centralism and since it took the shape of a popular movement it could not be simply ignored, because it seriously undermined the very stability of the state.

In the new state Muslims were recognized as a separate religious entity, at the same time denied the right to express themselves in national terms. The Bosnian Muslim intelligentsia had to balance a delicate act between Serb and Croat parallel designs for their assimilation. However, the antagonism towards Islam was expectedly more obvious among the Serbs, who had suffered for five centuries under harsh Turkish rule. Serbs intimidated the Muslim community with aggressive demands that they renounce their connection to Islam, and re-embrace the ‘true faith of their grandfathers’. Croat national ideologues had a different, more sensible, yet equally assimilative approach. They rather flattered the Muslims, in light of Starcevic’s theory that Muslims are the best and purest Croats. Overall the Muslims felt culturally more similar to, and less threatened by Croats, who proved to be somewhat more tolerant toward their identity.

Two events made Muslim-Serb relation in Bosnia bitter. First is the Muslim loyalty to Austria-Hungary during the course of the WWI that resulted in attacks on Serb population and property. The war will produce what Lampe calls the “first case of ethnic cleansing” on the territory of Bosnia. The Habsburg Military unit made out of Bosnian Croats and Muslims, led by the military governor of Bosnia General Stefan Sarkotic (a Croat from the Military Frontier) deported thousands of Serbs (about 5000), and expelled many from their homes in the Drina Valley and town of Foca. Many were massacred and many confined in concentration camps. By the end of 1917, the total number of deported and confined reached perhaps about 100 000. The immediate consequence of this action was to boost the numbers for Serbian guerillas and the proponents of unification with Serbia. The longer lasting consequence was that this incident could be turned into the powerful weapon for Serbian nationalists, who could interpret it as

27 Although the means were different, Sokolovic argues, the goal of these different courting methods was the same: to assimilate the Muslim minority. He quotes a scene that Ivan Mestrovic had described in his memoirs, and that took place during the negotiations between the Serbian Government and the Yugoslav Council on Corfu. During the meeting on the future of the common state, the fate of Bosnian Muslims was discussed as well. Prokic, the minister of the Serbian government at the time, proposed that Bosnian Muslims would have 24 to 48 hours to convert to their grandfathers’ true faith and to embrace the Cross again. Those who would reject the offer would be simply killed. The question from the Yugoslav Council was to which grandfathers’ cross, Orthodox or Catholic, should they convert to? Dzemal Sokolovic, Nation vs. People, Cambridge Scholars Press, Newcastle, 2006, p.188.

28 The war will produce what Lampe calls the “first case of ethnic cleansing” on the territory of Bosnia. The Habsburg Military unit made out of Bosnian Croats and Muslims, led by the military governor of Bosnia General Stefan Sarkotic (a Croat from the Military Frontier) deported thousands of Serbs (about 5000), and expelled many from their homes in the Drina Valley and town of Foca. Many were massacred and many confined in concentration camps. By the end of 1917, the total number of deported and confined reached perhaps about 100 000. The immediate consequence of this action was to boost the numbers for Serbian guerillas and the proponents of unification with Serbia. The longer lasting consequence was that this incident could be turned into the powerful weapon for Serbian nationalists, who could interpret it as
delayed land reform.\textsuperscript{29} The situation exploded in 1918, just before this most needed reform was passed, initiating many acts of violence, not only against Muslim landlords, but also Muslim smallholders who made up half of Bosnia’s free peasants. The agrarian reform that followed had to be on the expense of one side. Although it took a full thirteen years to implement, it gave a land to those who cultivated it. About 4000 Muslim landowning families were compensated, although the compensation was often inadequate, since part of the compensation was in cash, and part in state bonds that were not issued until 1929. It was the part of the larger land reform on the level of the Yugoslavia.

The Bosnian Muslim community had its own political representative in the \textit{Yugoslavian Muslim Organization} (hereafter, JMO) led by a Vienna-trained lawyer Mehmed Spaho. The party’s goal was to protect the interests of Muslim landlords, ensure them fair compensation in the land reform, but also to protect the interests of all other Muslims in Yugoslavia, the majority of whom were peasant smallholders. The formation of Bosnian Muslim nationhood was not yet finished. They had their identification wrapped around their religion and lacked the national name. At the same time, their national aspirations were unacceptable to the Croats and Serbs.\textsuperscript{30} Courted by both, Spaho’s party attempted to avoid the partition of Bosnia in any way, because it feared that this would turn the Muslims into minority, and inevitably lead to assimilation. In order to avoid that, Spaho decided to manipulate both sides, and forge coalitions with them on an \textit{ad hoc} basis, depending upon who would offer a better deal to his community. It was the JMO that enabled the passing of the centralist Constitution of 1921, backing Pasic’s proposal after Radic withdrew his delegates. Spaho voted for

\textsuperscript{29} As we already discussed in the previous chapter, Muslim domination in Bosnia created a unique phenomenon of mostly Muslim class of landowners. Muslims made up 91.15% of all landlords. 73.92% of all \textit{kmets} (serfs/sharecroppers) were Orthodox and 21.49% were Catholics. Yet only 0.18 percent of all Bosnian landlords had more than 2.5 hectares of land, due to inheritance laws that favored constant division of land among the offspring’s after father’s death. Banac, \textit{The National Question in Yugoslavia}, p.367.

\textsuperscript{30} Evidently the process of national formation was not finished yet among the Muslims. Spaho was rather insisting on ad hoc alliances with the Croats or the Serbs. All the Bosnian Muslim deputies in the first parliament declared themselves as Croats. Spaho had two brothers; one was declaring himself as Croat, the other as Serb, while Spaho insisted on being called Yugoslav. The party’s journal openly argued that Muslims should identify with whichever nation offered them the better prospects for economic development. See Malcolm, \textit{Bosnia, A Short History}, pp.163-166. Also see Banac \textit{The National Question in Yugoslavia}, p.370.
centralist Constitution in order to obtain an internal administrative division that would leave Bosnian historical borders virtually intact. Until the end, Spaho played a strategic game between the Serbs and Croats, never compromising only the administrative integrity of Bosnia.

Cultural Bonds

While the Serbian political elite dominated the political realm, the cultural sphere was marked by genuine tolerance, cooperation and mutual respect of intellectuals from all sides. Before and immediately after the unification, Yugoslavism had most of its adherents in the circle of various intellectuals and artists. Despite the political backwardness and the lack of general cultural development and education of the wider population it would be hard to speak about the backwardness within the cultural elite.\(^{31}\) Influenced by modern European movements, the cultural elites promoted Yugoslav and wider European identity, rather than separate narrow ethnic identities.\(^{32}\) They were working vigorously to define the new Yugoslav culture firmly believing that the existing cultural differences between the ‘three tribes’ were temporary and reconcilable.

In the first decades of the 1900’s Belgrade, as a true cosmopolitan center, was swamped with artists and intellectuals and professionals from every corner of the newly unified country. The large Russian-émigré artistic community that settled there after fleeing the Revolution provided an international flair.\(^{33}\) Serbian literature was particularly influenced by Surrealism, reflecting European styles and ideas. Belgrade established extensive cultural connections, as well as rivalries, with the two other emerging cultural

---

31 One of the factors contributing to the failure of the first Yugoslavia was certainly disparity in rates of education of wider population and high illiteracy in the most of the country. Those high rates of illiteracy certainly limited the population’s ways of getting information and favorized the trend of voting for ethnic parties, rather than for those who offered the best political platform. In 1921 rates of illiteracy were as follows: Slovenia 8.8%, Vojvodina 23.3%, Croatia-Slavonia 32.3%, Dalmatia 49.5%, Serbia 65.4%, Montenegro 67%, Bosnia 80.5%, and Macedonia 83.4%. See Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p.76.


33 The massive influx of about 30 000 Russian immigrants fleeing the Bolshevik revolution settled in Belgrade, mostly an artistic and intellectual community, who significantly raised cultural standards, bringing the theater, opera and universities to a European level. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 1996, p.142.
centers of Zagreb and Ljubljana. There was a “significant personal and regional bonding” and unmatched positive energy towards the new state and the creation of the new culture. Looking up at the example of German and Italian national unification, the intelligentsia saw the formation of unified culture as a long and arduous process, but nevertheless, they saw its creation as inevitable.

The Croatian intellectual elite was one of the loudest proponents of the idea of Yugoslavia. The most ardent proponents of the idea of the Yugoslavism among Croats were Tin Ujevic and Ivan Mestrovic, who made permanent home in bohemian circles of Belgrade. In addition to Ujevic and Krleza, Cesarec, and Nazor, many others argued for building of a unitary culture. The Serbian liberal daily Politika and influential literary journal Književni Jug made Croatian left-wing writer Miroslav Krleza better known and more popular than in his native Zagreb. Every major Yugoslavian writer was a contributor to this journal, which was published simultaneously in Serbo-Croat and Slovenian, and was printed in both the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets. Serbian intellectuals as Milan Grol, and prominent linguist Ljubomir Stojanovic argued for the accommodation of others in the new state and forming Yugoslavia as a federation of equals. Jovan Cvijic joined them calling his design for federal arrangement the United States of Yugoslavia. The new generations of students, educated in Paris and London,

---

34 Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.145.
35 Writer Tin Ujevic and sculptor Ivan Mestrovic moved to Belgrade. Mestrovic, without doubt the greatest Croatian and Yugoslav sculptor, was often called a ‘Messiah of Yugoslav unitarism.’ He established his brilliant reputation before the WW I by creating an impressive body of work around the myth of battle of Kosovo. After the unification he attempted melding different cultural traditions in his work, using themes from Serbian mythology and rendering them in a modern Western European cast, more characteristic for Croatian artistic tradition. Despite the fact that he enjoyed the support of King Alexander, who commissioned many of his works for Belgrade public spaces, he failed to bridge the two dominant cultures. His vision of unified culture was equally attacked from both sides, as well as from his ideological colleagues. The Serbian side saw his methods as foreign and as an attack on their traditions. Croats attacked him for his exclusive choice of Serbian themes. Finally his ideological friends, who equally supported Yugoslavism, criticized him for using historical romanticism in order to create the false impression of Yugoslavia as a unified nation. Krleza, along with Ujevic and Crnjanski, rejected Mestrovic’s model of multicultural synthesis and argued for the creation of a completely new, modern and supra-national Yugoslav culture. “In a word, what happened to Mestrovic was the worst fate that can befall a synthesizer. Rather than being accepted by the two sides as the bridge between cultures, he ended up being seen as foreign body by both.” See Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, p.117.
36 Two more journals were published in Zagreb. Jugoslovenska Njiva and Nova Europa had also contributors from all of Yugoslavia and promulgated a vision of a unified Yugoslav culture. Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, p.85.
37 Cvijic was the most ardent proponent of a synthetic unified culture on the Serbian side. He argued: “New qualities that until now have been expressed but weakly will appear. An amalgamation of the most fertile
Vienna and Prague, returned to their country thus enriching and elevating intellectual life of the capital.

Yet, all positive energy created by a long awaited unification was quickly spent, as even the most ardent proponents of Yugoslavism were disappointed with the style of the imposed centralism and cultural unitariam based on Serbdom. The efforts of the artistic and intellectual communities on all sides could not influence, or change, terribly outdated views of the ruling political parties, that firmly belonged to past centuries. All positive unifying energy was exhausted quickly, as the hard reality set in, and the national question started dominating and pervading public discourse.\(^{38}\)

Cirkovic explains that the new state, regarded and ruled as an extended Serbia, would have a paradoxically disintegrating effect on Serbs. In the new state, the Serbs were finally united as a nation, and turned from an oppressed minority in unifying lands into a ruling nation. In the new environment they felt safe in every respect, which led them to political plurality, demonstrated by many political parties and alternative designs for a state constitution. On the other hand, as the state itself was unstable and constantly in crisis, members of the other nations established much stronger ties on the basis of ethnicity and acted through their large, mostly ethnic parties, out of opposition to Serbian domination.\(^{39}\) Indeed, Croatian nationalism was the most prominent, but also the nationalistic tendencies of all other Yugoslavian nations, has to be seen, rather as a reaction to the harsh centralism of the Yugoslav state. It was the ill-conceived fulfillment of this state that inflamed nationalisms to the point of separation. The Croats went full

---

\(^{38}\) Indeed, as Banac argues, prewar Yugoslav unitarism was a predominantly Croat intellectual phenomenon. Most of the Croatian artist and writers abandoned the pre-war defined principles of ‘national unity’ out of disappointment with the new state, and the whole notion of constructing a unitary culture lost all steam. Krleza and Cesarec embraced communism, fiercely criticizing the Monarchy and bourgeois Yugoslavism. Ujevic was so disappointed with nationalism that he declared himself as an Irishman, while Mestrovic turned to mysticism. Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, p.207.

circle from being the main proponents of the Yugoslav idea to the main carriers of the separatist idea and anti-Yugoslavism.⁴⁰

Royal Dictatorship and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia

In June 1928, a member of the Serbian Radical Party assassinated the three members of Croatia’s Peasant Party, in the federal parliament, mortally wounding Radic. Radic’s death two months later plunged the already dysfunctional county into a new crisis, as it provoked Croatia-wide demonstrations, and radicalized the Croatian national movement. In 1929 King Alexander took advantage of this crisis to carry a coup d’etat. On January 6, 1929, (the Orthodox Church’s Christmas Eve), citing concerns over maintaining the peace and order in the country, he abolished the constitution, dissolved parliament, outlawed all political parties, and took all powers in his own hands. The theory of ‘three tribes’ was abolished, and instead, the King promoted Yugoslavism, as the new official ideology.⁴¹ The country was divided into new administrative divisions called banovina, named after the major rivers. All national symbols, names and emblems were banned. A month after, in a special decree, he unsuccessfully tried to banish Cyrillic and to promote the exclusive use of the Latin alphabet. The idea of a Yugoslav ‘melting pot’ was the fresh way of creating the new nation, by erasing borders, different state and ethnic traditions in order to forge a new Yugoslav identity. The country’s name was changed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (The Land of South Slavs).

⁴⁰ Wachtel argues that it is not centralization per se, but rather centralization with a dominant Serbian accent that was the source of problems. It was obvious that before the unification an overwhelming majority of Croatian and Slovenian politicians had believed in the possibility of creating Yugoslavia as a community of equals. Had a different version of centralism been worked out, one that did not favor a particular national group, ethnic nationalism in Croatia and other republics would have had much less of a hold. The main legacy of the First Yugoslavia was “this suspicion that unitarism was always and only another name for the Serbian domination in Yugoslavia.” This caused all sorts of problems within the following years and greatly hampered the chances for a success of the Second Yugoslavia. Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, pp. 76-9.

⁴¹ Mestrovic in his memoirs paints a portrait of the King as someone who is fully committed to the unity of the country and a solution to the Serbo-Croat question on the basis of the full equality of two nations. Yet, he was constrained by a high-ranking military circles and the Serbian bourgeoisie surrounding him, fully adherent to the idea of Serbian hegemony in Yugoslavia. See Mestrovic, Uspomene na političke ljudje i dogadjaje, pp. 232-7.
The September Constitution of 1931 was quickly nicknamed Oktroisani Ustav (the Imposed Constitution), by the opposition, which argued that king was in fact trying to uphold the centralist regime, this time coupled with the authoritarian rule, disguised under the thin veneer of Yugoslavism, and fake parliamentary life that was re-established with the new constitution. The King’s dictatorship increased political repression and that way stimulated several extremist movements. On the left, the Communist party became fiercely prosecuted and went underground. On the far right, Ante Pavelic, the future leader of the Croatian puppet state, fled the country for Italy, seeking Mussolini’s protection. Even the political center suffered. One of most ardent unitarist politicians, Pribicevic was at first interned, and than exiled, Radic’s successor Macek spent almost two years in prison.

The King’s assassination, in October 1934 during his visit to France, by Macedonian and Croatian extremists, came as a new shock for the country. Also, a deep recession, which was dragging on for the whole decade, further exacerbated country’s economic problems. With the Anschluss of Austria in 1939, Germany became Yugoslavia’s northern neighbour. Over the next year all other neighbouring countries joined Germany’s Axis Power camp. Yugoslavia found itself surrounded by hostile neighbours, while its allies were far away and preoccupied with their own problems.

With dark clouds on the horizon, Prince Pavle Karadjordjevic finally decided to settle the Serbo-Croat question in the hope of advancing the country’s stability. In August 1939 “Sporazum” (The Agreement) was signed between Serbian Prime Minister Cvetkovic and Radic’s successor Macek. The agreement created some sort of asymmetric federation, as it finally granted Croatia a substantial territorial and administrative autonomy. The newly formed Croatian banovina got its own parliament and the office of

---

42 The party called on violent revolt against Alexander’s regime. This call was reaffirmed by the Comintern’s 1928 congress that proclaimed Yugoslavia as a creature of the West and “Versailles system” and issued an open call to all communists and all non-Serbs to contribute to the break-up of Yugoslavia. In fact the Comintern was expecting an imminent attack by the West against the Soviet Union and was looking for the ways to disable all potential enemies. The Communist party, at that time with less than a 500 members, was torn by internal struggle. Yet, this small detail was underlined by Serbian pseudo-historians in the 1980’s to prove the mind-boggling thesis that Comintern conspired together with Vatican on the break-up of the Yugoslavia. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.171.

43 The Macedonian separatist party IMRO followed and also set up headquarters in Italy. Together they would assassinate King Alexander, in 1934, during his official visit to France. The killing was carried out by the IMRO assassin Vlado Chernozemski, yet, according to Mestrovic, fully orchestrated by Mussolini.
ban was reinstated. The Banovina was supposed to have complete jurisdiction over the administration of the economy, social policy and education. Croatian politicians complained about the limited character of autonomy and Serbians complained about the loss of authority, labeling this as a final act of separatism. Yet, the move eased the political deadlock and opened the way towards constitutional reform that was never completed because of war. Nevertheless the agreement practically settled the main tension in the country at the expense of Bosnia and its Muslim constituency, who had never been asked about it. The “Agreement” split the territory of Bosnia along the ethnic lines, dividing it between the Serbs and Croats, an ominous sign of what was to be attempted again seven decades later between Tudjman and Milosevic.

With Italy making aggressive claims on the territory of Yugoslavia once again, and all other Yugoslavia’s neighbours already in the Hitler’s camp, Yugoslavian politicians had no other option but to pursue politics of German appeasement. In March of 1941, the government was finally forced to sign acceptance of Tripartite Pact, and officially join the Axis power. Immediately after the news reached Belgrade, massive demonstrations erupted in the center of city. A group of pro-British Yugoslav army officers staged a coup and proclaimed a new coalition government. Young King Peter was proclaimed of age (he was a few weeks short), and he assumed all royal prerogatives. Hitler insulted by the “Serbian renegades”, ordered the invasion of Yugoslavia. Without declaration of war, the Luftwaffe levelled Belgrade during a three day bombardment, that commenced at dawn on April 6, 1941. The fragile state that never functioned properly, capitulated in a ten days: “The creative energy symbolized by the unification and the accumulation of human, intellectual, and economic potential had foundered on the phenomena of permanent political crisis and national antagonism. Yugoslavia had gambled away its first historical chances.”

Historical conditions demonstrate that long before the formation of Yugoslavia, the seeds of conflict were sown. Different ideas about the way to build their own and common state came from completely diverse Serbian and Croatian historical experiences,

---

especially those endured under foreign rule. Long foreign domination had contributed
towards discontinuity between borders and the location of national populations. It also
created huge economic and social discrepancies between different parts of the country.
Both, Serbian and Croatian national politics developed around the German idea of Volk,
and saw their states as an exclusive home for their own people. This resulted in an
“entrenched national identities and conflicting national ideologies.”

Serbs from the position of the oppressed minority turned to oppressing majority
due to the way their outdated political elite applied the concept of nation-state to the first
common state. That pushed others to move in the opposite direction, arguing separation,
while forgetting to apply the same rules they asked for themselves, towards minorities
living on their territory. This brought about an ill-conceived realization of the nation-
state as an exclusive domain of one’s Volk, which, in turn produced mayhem within the
complex ethnic tapestry of Yugoslavia, and turned it into nightmare for all of its
constituents, ultimately becoming a source of further conflict.

The First Yugoslavia failed to accommodate all of its constituent groups and
establish the atmosphere of real equality and tolerance. Above all, it failed to bring
desperately needed economic and political modernization, establish a rule of law, and to
guarantee state neutrality in the matter of religion, language or national culture. So, the
“ethnic politics syndrome”, that would follow Yugoslavia to its grave, should rather be
seen as a product of the first common state and its failure to develop legitimacy and

---

46 Both nationalisms, Serbian and Croatian, had a twisted but self-serving logic. Perhaps this is best seen in
the clash between territorial and ethnic rights in South Slav history. The Serbs claimed Kosovo, the cradle
of their medieval kingdom, as irrevocably Serbian territory, on the basis of historic state right. The fact
about Albanian preponderance on Kosovo, since 1679 when thousands of Serbs led by their Patriarch fled
to then Habsburg territories of today’s Vojvodina, was simply ignored. On the other hand, the territory of
Bosnia, that always had been an independent entity, was claimed on the basis of ethnic rights and Serbian
preponderance there, denied to Albanians in the case of Kosovo. Also, the territories where Serbs have fled,
parts of Croatia and Vojvodina, were claimed on the same basis. The Croats, conversely, employed the
very same argument as Serbs on Kosovo, in the case of Bosnia. The parts of Bosnian territory that belonged
to Croatia before the Ottoman conquest were claimed on the basis of historic state right, although the
Croats, like the Serbs on Kosovo, were the ethnic minority in Bosnia since the seventeenth century. The
same historic claims of Italy on the territory of Dalmatia were categorically denied on the base of ethnic
right, quoting the fact that 82 percent of population of Dalmatia was Croatian. The fact that Dalmatia was a
part of the Roman Empire long before the Croats arrived on the Balkan Peninsula was conveniently
forgotten. The same ethnic right claimed by Croats in the case of Dalmatia, was denied to a large Serb
population in the territory of Croatia in areas where they had been a majority, employing the argument of
Croatian state right. See Jelavich, South Slav Nationalisms, pp.267-8.
functionality, and not the other way around. Ramet sums it up nicely in one sentence: “The national question was not a cause of the disfunctionality of the system; on the contrary, it was the disfunctionality of the system which generated the national question.”

The War and the Formation of the Second Yugoslavia

Simultaneously with the bombardment of Belgrade on April 6, 1941, Yugoslavia was invaded by enemy ground troops, and soon after partitioned between Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria. The King and the government fled to London leaving the country in total chaos that would quickly escalate into a bloody civil war of all against all. The Second World War on the territory of Yugoslavia was an extremely complicated affair and may be best untangled and explained as several wars on the top of each other. The first war was the one that was imposed on Yugoslavia by Axis powers, after the regular army capitulated and the state of Yugoslavia collapsed. The second war was conducted between the forces of the Axis and Yugoslavia’s resistance movements - Tito’s Partisans, and Mihailovic’s Chetniks. Than, there was the brutal and extremely bloody civil war involving all the Yugoslav people, between the fractions of the resistance movements fighting for primacy in antifascist camp. The last one was the war of the Croatian puppet state against the Serb population, and the acts of indiscriminate retaliation by Serbs within the ranks of Chetniks and Partisans towards the Croatian and Muslim populations. In short, this was a total war of all against all, along the lines of political and ethnic separation, in which people of Yugoslavia paid the hefty price of 1100 000 lives.

In Croatia the extremist right wing party of Ante Pavelic, returned from Italian exile, and propped by Germans and Italians set up a puppet Independent State of Croatia

---

47 Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p.76.
49 This was a second biggest loss of life, compared to size of the population, right after USSR. Scholars have agreed that some 500 000 Serbs, 200 000 Croats, 90 000 Bosnian Muslims, 60 000 Jews, 50 000 Montenegrins and 30 000 Slovenes have perished in the course of war. See Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.380.
Fulfilling its ambitions for a Great Croatia, it also absorbed the whole of Bosnia. Despite the name, the new country was a fascist puppet state that was divided between German and Italian zones of interest. The Ustashas were a small extremist party, which, before the war, did not enjoy much support among the Croatian population. Yet after the two decades of harsh centralism from Belgrade, the establishment of the ‘independent’ state was seen as an act of liberation from Yugoslavia. Goldstein argues that from the way Germans were greeted when they entered Zagreb, in addition to the many other events of those days, it was obvious that the Croatian population welcomed the establishment of NDH. Pavelic took the title of Poglavnik (Fuhrer) and become both, the prime and a foreign affairs minister. People swamped the ranks of the movement and in the month of May it already had 100,000 members, mostly drafted from the less educated classes.

Disappointment was soon to follow, as Pavelic signed the whole Dalmatian Coast and Gorski Kotar to Italy, even though population there was 90 percent Croatian. Very soon the northern parts were given to Hungary. But the biggest distress and disillusionment came from a campaign of sheer terror towards minorities, as well as towards Croats with different political views, which soon followed. First, the small Jewish minority was rounded up; its property confiscated, and then sent off to the concentration camps in Germany. Getting rid of the Jews was done mostly to appease Germans. The main problem for Ustashe was the sizable Serb minority, that now found itself within the NDH (1.9 million out of 6.3 million inhabitants). Soon the government implemented the ‘final solution’ of the Croat question, an outright genocide of the Serbian population.

Following, or rather abusing, Kvaternik’s and Starcevic’s Romantic theories of a pure ethnic state, the Ustasha regime devised a plan under which one third of Serbs would be deported to Serbia, one third converted to Catholicism, and the other third

---

50 Pavelic’s Ustashas were not the first choice for the Germans. They tried approaching Radic’s popular successor Vlatko Macek, but he declined the offer. He issued a statement calling all citizens to respect the new authorities but went into passive resistance. Pavelic also tried to involve him later on several occasions, with the new state. Macek firmly refused, which earned him six months of jail in Jasenovac, followed by house arrest until the end of the war. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, pp.203-209.
51 Goldstein, Croatia, A History, p.134.
52 The pre-war Jewish population had numbered 36,000. Barely 4000 survived the war. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.207.
simply exterminated. In addition to Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and communists of all other nationalities were systematically killed in *Jasenovac* and *Stara Gradiska*, the only WW II concentration camps not established and run by Germans.\(^53\) The number of the victims was never officially established\(^54\), leaving much space for manipulation and later exploitation by Serbian and Croatian pseudo-histories alike, while fanning the ethnic conflict half a century later: “The silence of the dead was no obstacle to the exhumation of their deepest desires.”\(^55\)

In Serbia, the collaborationist regime of Milan Nedic was set up, run by military officers and under the direct control of Germans. It was a quisling government that even had its own state guard, made of supporters of pre war right wing nationalist party of Dimitrije Ljotic. Again, as in Croatia, a pre-war, ultra-right party became part of the occupation system instigated by Germany. Yet, unlike Ustashas, Ljotic forces almost never operated independently, and most of the serious crimes against the civil population on the territory of Serbia were committed by Germans. Serbia saw less warfare than the rest of the country, yet its civilian population suffered the Nazi terror more directly. In Serbia, at the beginning of the war, the Partisans did not have many supporters, since their attacks on Germans were more aggressive than Chetniks’, eliciting brutal reprisals

\(^53\) It is ironic that a level of brutality shocked even the Germans. They showed their open disdain towards NDH and intervened several times with Croatian authorities to quell their terror campaigns. With their main goal of eradicating Jews achieved, in fact the Germans did not want to continue feeding the ranks of Serbian guerrillas and partisan movements, as they needed their lines of communication and supply with Salonica to stay uninterrupted. The Italians on the other hand took a more practical approach. The regime in their zone of occupation was much less oppressive. At first they intervened several times directly to protect Serb’s regions from Ustasha’s terror. After that they openly collaborated with Chetniks, who would fight NDH and Partisans often under direct Italian control. Chetniks on the other side were interested only in protection of Serbian population, massively retaliating against Croats and Muslims. They collaborated with Italians and Germans in order to fight Partisans. See Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, pp.206-217. See also Goldstein, *Croatia, A History*, pp.131-151.

\(^54\) After the war, the communists leveled Jasenovac but never opened the debate about the numbers that had perished there. It was a genuine, but probably wrong, attempt to heal the wounds between the Serbs and Croats. In 1966, a memorial center was built to commemorate the victims. The number of Serb victims of NDH was debated passionately from pseudo historiographers on both sides. It went from ridiculously high 1 000 000 as proposed by some Serbian historians, to as low as under 70 000 as proposed by historian and Croatian president Tudjman. The most reasonable estimates were given by Croatian demographer Zerjavic and Serbian demographer Kocovic, who both estimated the number of victims at 300 000. Out of that grim total, Jasenovac and Stara Gradiska were probably responsible for about 100 000 victims. See Lampe *Yugoslavia as History* p.207. In addition 200 000 Serbs were expelled to Serbia and additional 200 000 were converted to Catholicism, although it is clear that these conversions were temporary. See Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*, p.141.

\(^55\) Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.198.
from the occupying force.\textsuperscript{56} Traditional dislike of Germans, and their terror against civilians, prevented the wider collaboration with them, however all the guiding principles of Nazism - such as racism, anti-Semitism, and hatred towards democracy - were successfully grafted onto local traditions, and resulted in a movement of returning to Serbian roots, revival of cult of Orthodoxy, nationalism, resurrection of patriarchal ideas and the rejection of anything foreign.\textsuperscript{57}

A resistance movement quickly sprung up, first in Bosnia and in Croatia, as its ranks swelled with Serbs fleeing the relentless terror of the Ustasha regime.\textsuperscript{58} In the beginning there were two resistance movements on the totally opposite sides of ideological spectrum. The government in exile looked towards the Chetnik resistance movement - the Serb officers and soldiers who fled to the hills after the official army was disbanded. They were led by army colonel Draza Mihajlovic. Although they enjoyed the official support of the Allies, they soon discredited themselves by putting no resistance against Germans, and by committing many atrocities against the Muslim and Croat population in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia.\textsuperscript{59} Mihajlovic was loyal to the King and government in exile and fought for a return of the Serbian Monarchy. His troops did not

\textsuperscript{56} After September 1941, the German Command announced the exceptionally harsh rule that for every German soldier killed, 100 civilians were to be executed, an additional 50 for each one wounded. As a consequence massive executions of civilians followed. At first, it was Belgrade’s tiny Jewish community of 12 000 that was wiped out. Massive executions of Serbian civilians followed. In the city of Kragujevac, even children from the schools were taken out and executed. Cirkovic, \textit{The Serbs}, p.271.

\textsuperscript{57} Cirkovic, \textit{The Serbs}, p.294.

\textsuperscript{58} The number of Serbs who joined the resistance movement was disproportionate compared to the other nationalities, not only because of a tradition of armed resistance to foreign rule, but mostly due to the terror of Ustasha state. Serb preponderance in Partisan forces would remain a problem for Tito after the war. However, the Croatian participation should not be dismissed, as it was often done after the war in circles of Serbian nationalists. A massive resistance movement was mounted in Dalmatia, first against Italians, and than after their capitulation, against the Germans. In fact, it was Bosnian and Croatian Serbs and Dalmatian Croats who bore the brunt of the war and fighting in the Partisan resistance movement. They were joined by members of all other nationalities, from all republics, during the course of war, mostly during and after 1943. See Djuric, “\textit{Istorijski koreni Srpsko- Hrvatskog sukoba}”, p.82.

\textsuperscript{59} The name Chetnik comes from the Serbian guerillas that were fighting the Ottoman Turks and it is the source of endless confusion. They were many different groups of Chetniks as they were not a unified force. They often appeared as local guerilla forces, led by local commanders. Mihajlovic’s Chetniks should not be confused with Chetniks of Kosta Pecanac who collaborated with Germans from the beginning of the war and committed terrible acts of ethnic violence against the civil population in Bosnia and Serbia. See Judah, \textit{The Serbs}, p.117.
put up any significant effort to fight Germans; their tactic was to build the movement and to wait for Allied forces to turn the tide of the war.\textsuperscript{60}

The Communist Party under leadership of Josip Broz Tito was the other force committed to the resistance of the occupation and to the original idea of Yugoslavia as a federation of equals. Tito was not only fighting the war for liberation but also a war for a social revolution with the final goal of achieving a federal communist state.\textsuperscript{61} The final success of Tito’s partisans, who emerged as victors at the end of the war, was achieved against all odds. The Communist party had been fiercely prosecuted before the war, playing only a marginal role in the political life of the country.\textsuperscript{62} During the war they were fighting against a much more formidable force.\textsuperscript{63} Also, their ideology was foreign to the majority of a mostly peasant population.

The Communist’s success can be attributed to the flexibility in their organization and their ability to build political institutions from the grass roots up, but also their commitment to the ideal of full equality of all Yugoslavia’s nations. Tito, although anti-nationalist, but well aware of Yugoslavia’s ethnic problems, used nationalism as a mobilizing strategy in the fight against invaders as well as a support for particular national goals of Yugoslavia’s different nations: “Thus in Slovenia they allied themselves

\textsuperscript{60} One of the facts in Mihajlovic’s defense for not fighting the Germans was the above-mentioned rule of reciprocity, where for the life of one German soldier, 100 Serbian civilians were executed. The instructions from the government in exile in London were to lay low and save Serbian lives and resources. As Matvejevic argues, Mihajlovic was not fascist or racist but, rather, Serbian nationalist and radically anticommmunist. Nevertheless, Chetniks compromised themselves not only by protecting the Serb population only and allowing at the same time the elimination of non-Serb citizens, but also by actively retaliating and committing atrocities against the Muslims and Croats. See Predrag Matvejevic “De Gaulle-Tito-Mihajlovic-Povijest i mit”, Zenicke sveske, broj 3, Bosansko Narodno Pozoriste, Zenica, 2006.Also see Malcolm, \textit{Bosnia, A Short History}, pp.176-180.

\textsuperscript{61} In the beginning Tito’s partisans were promoting their struggle as a pure war of liberation, a fight for a fair ethnic balance and democratic post war order. Initially, the communist vocabulary deliberately omitted proclamations about class struggle and socialistic revolution. Goldstein, \textit{Croatia: A History}, pp.140-150.

\textsuperscript{62} The Communist party was successful in the first parliamentary elections, securing third place. However, the party was outlawed in 1921, when it went underground for 10 years. In that period it lost many of its members in bitter internal disputes, as well as in the Spanish Civil War. In 1937 Josip Broz Tito, half Croat, half Slovene, returned from Moscow, and became the party’s First Secretary. Although a capable organizer and shrewd politician, few could ever have dreamt that he and his 8 000 followers would see the end of the war as absolute victors. Lampe, \textit{Yugoslavia as History}, p.213.

\textsuperscript{63} Although the Partisan struggle was idealized and turned into epic myth in the history books of the new state after the war, the fact is that Partisans facing the German juggernaut spend most of the war in tactical maneuvering, and building up the resistance movement, fighting mostly when they were attacked. They survived seven large German-led offensives and endured many loses. However they did win decisively the fight against the Chetniks. Most of the war was spent on Bosnian territory where they managed to accomplish a most complicated task - to put a stop to the mutual extermination of Bosnia’s ethnic groups. See Lampe \textit{Yugoslavia as History}, pp.213-6.
with Christian Democrats, in Croatia they recruited followers of the Peasant Party as well as Dalmatian Croats angry at Italians who sought to colonize the area and Serbs who suffered under or feared the Ustasha regime; in Bosnia-Herzegovina they brought together Croats, Serbs, Muslims and Jews, in Serbia and Montenegro they harked back to the national traditions of mutual aid from and for “Holy Russia”, now ruled by Stalin but, to many Orthodox peasants in the Balkans, no less Russia and no less holy.”

Pavelic’s NDH swallowed the territory of Bosnia. Although Muslims were praised as the “bloom of the Croat people” they had no political influence whatsoever, nor did they enjoy any privileges. Rather they were pushed into collaboration with the Ustasha’s regime. There was no attempt to convert the Muslims to Catholicism; a mosque was even built in Zagreb. Yet, many who expressed different political views were prosecuted and killed by NDH. After Spaho’s death the Muslim community was divided into several fractions. The leader of the Yugoslav Muslim Organization participated in the Pavelic’s government and there was also a special Muslim SS division, the so-called Handzar Division. It committed many atrocities against the Serb population in Eastern Herzegovina and North-eastern Bosnia, which provoked equally bloody reprisals by Serb guerrillas against Muslims. An odd minority of Muslims even fought in Chetnik’s ranks, equally as occasional collaboration between the Chetnik’s and Ustasha’s materialized to fight Partisans. This is worth mentioning only to illustrate the total chaos that prevailed in this extremely complex drama, as the alliances were often forged locally. On the other hand, many Muslims openly protested the treatment of Serbs and Jews in NDH, and many joined Tito’s partisans in 1943 and later. By creating the disciplined and determined force - that is committed to equality of all nations - Tito managed to calm the interethnic conflict in Bosnia and eventually win the overwhelming support of the population.

---

65 Ustasha and Chetnik forces had signed an agreement of local cooperation in Knin, in mid 1942. Yet, this cooperation was marked by mutual distrust and driven exclusively by the common goal of eliminating Partisans. See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, pp.145-9.
66 Many Bosnian Croats and Muslims were afraid of Serb preponderance in the Partisan’s ranks, fearing the reprisals for Ustasha’s terror and remembering the acts of retaliation from Serbs in the ranks of Partisans, especially against Muslims in Eastern Herzegovina or Croats in Krajina. Yet Tito managed to impose an internal discipline, and managed with time to subdue any reprisals or ethnic tensions. For example when Muslims fled their homes in fear of reprisals, Partisan forces would secure them and guarantied their safe
At the beginning of the war, the Partisans and the Chetniks tried collaborating in Southern Serbia, but soon it became clear that ideological differences were too big, and having recognized each other as the main rivals in the struggle for power, they parted ways. The two sides fought several battles in which Tito’s forces prevailed. At a certain point they both entertained ideas of collaboration with Allies and Germans, and spent the time until 1943 gathering the strength, building their movements, and waiting for the tide of war to be turned against the Germans. In 1943, Churchill sent a mission to both camps. British liaison officers, impressed by the Partisan’s determination, commitment and discipline persuaded British government to start backing Tito instead of Mihajlovic. To the dismay of the Yugoslavian Royals exiled in London, in 1943, Churchill frustrated with the Chetniks, recognized Tito’s Partisans as a major partner, throwing all the support of the Allies behind them. From then on, Mihajlovic started openly to collaborate with the Germans. On September 8, 1943, Italy capitulated. Tito did not only get British support, but also a large supply of arms from the disarmed Italians. Soon his movement increased dramatically in size, swelled by Croats and Muslims defecting from NDH, as well as Serbs from Serbia. In the summer of 1944 Germans began withdrawing their troops from Yugoslavia. At the end of the year Russian forces entered the county and, in joined operation with Tito’s partisans, liberated its northern territory.

On November 29, 1943, during the second session of the Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia, (hereafter, AVNOJ), a new state was born. It consisted of six equal federal units (called republics) - but only of five core nations. Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians got recognized as separate nations. The Bosnian Muslims were given the status of distinct group. Since Tito’s
Partisans spent most of their time on the territory of Bosnia, and needed the Muslim support, Tito decided to constitute Bosnia as a sixth federal unit. The idea of Yugoslavia was resurrected, this time sealed in the blood of fratricidal warfare: “The first post-World War I Yugoslavia had been created by intellectual and political elites. The new Yugoslavia that emerged from World War II was seen as a creation of the people. Despite legacy of the ill-fated royal state, and despite the terrible crimes committed in the name of nationality during World War II, Yugoslavism provided a context for reconciliation. Common life was not only possible, but necessary.”  

Chapter 4
Tito’s Yugoslavia
1945-1980

The so-called Second Yugoslavia emerged after WW II as a result of the struggle by the genuine partisan movement that involved almost all the people of Yugoslavia. The immense suffering and tragedy of all participants in this drama - the terrible price paid in blood - united once again all the nationalities of Yugoslavia in a common state. This state, led by the charismatic resistance leader - Josip Broz Tito - would spend its five decades in power in pursuit of a solution to bring about political changes and economic prosperity. Its constant reforms were, however, thwarted by the Communist’s party unwillingness to share its monopoly on power. In this process, an effort to forge a supra-national identity and its lasting connection to the idea of One Yugoslavia would be abandoned. The road to decentralisation and the promotion of particular identities would be chosen. This choice guaranteed the equality of Yugoslavia’s constitutive nations, but also addressed the much needed - but so far absent - democratic reforms. The development of the state was also intrinsically linked to the person who guided it through political adventures. Always ready to experiment with anything that would not affect his own hold on power, Tito’s years will remain in the memory of Yugoslavia’s postwar generations as the ‘golden age’, in which the Yugoslav imagined community almost became a reality. Yet, as we shall see in this chapter, those years, despite bringing the unquestionable prosperity and guarantying equality to the people of Yugoslavia, would not be able to get rid of the fatal flaw in the design of the political system. Unable to meet the challenge, its policy makers would condemn Yugoslavia to follow the fate of its leader, surviving him for barely a decade.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Yugoslavia’s future was debated in February of 1945, at the Yalta’s conference, where Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed on what the post-war world should look like. While securing their respective zones of influence, they forged a compromise that
was to guarantee post-war world stability, determining at the same time Yugoslavia’s future. It was agreed that post-war Yugoslavia, because of its crucial geo-strategic position, should form a coalition government and have a free elections after the war that would decide its future.¹

Before, as well as during the war, Tito was Stalin’s most fervent disciple. He was also eager to receive full recognition by the Allies. He met in 1944, on the Island of Vis, with Ivan Subasic, a pre-war Croatian Ban and, a representative of the Yugoslav government in exile. They signed an agreement guaranteeing free elections after the end of the war. At that time, Tito was still denying that he had any intentions of imposing a communist system to Yugoslavia. On the contrary, the declaration guaranteed the creation of a democratic society. However, the reality on the ground was very different, since partisans held control over most of the territory, except in the large cities.

Respecting the compromise reached with the Allies, the Communists allowed immediately after the war, the return of the government in exile, with an exception of the King and his family, whose return was forbidden by the decisions of the partisan parliament (AVNOJ) in 1943. The opposition returned to Belgrade in order to prepare for what were supposed to be democratic elections. A coalition government was formed, to bridge the period until the elections, with Tito as a prime minister, Grol as his deputy, and Subasic as a foreign minister.

Faced with constant harassment, disappointed with a controversial election law and the widespread irregularities surrounding the elections, most of the opposition resigned from the work of coalition government. They decided to boycott the elections that proved to be seriously flawed by the many irregularities in the voting procedure.²

¹ In fact, the agreement between Stalin and Churchill from October 1944, had already divided influence in Yugoslavia on a 50-50 basis between the East and the West. The British, who harbored the King and the government in exile, insisted on retaining their influence in Yugoslavia, guaranteed after the war by the military muscle of the USA. Stalin, at that time, perceived no threat in this arrangement since Yugoslavia had no common borders with the Soviet Union. Woodward insists that Tito, despite his rhetoric of independence, was supposed to operate on the level of local autonomy and within the constraints of this compromise. See Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy, Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.1995, p.24.

² Although the elections were conducted by secret ballot, the electoral campaign was seriously flawed. The Croatian civic opposition, decapitated by the absence of its popular leader Macek, who had fled the country to avoid possible arrest, tried to unite behind Marija Radic, widow of the still immensely popular Stjepan Radic. Ironically they faced the opposition from one of their own members, Subasic, who naively believed that Tito was ready to share power with him. After only one issue, their party newspaper, calling on a
a result, the communist controlled, *Popular Front* captured over 80 percent of the vote. On November 29, 1945, the anniversary of the historic session of the first partisan parliament in Jajce two years earlier, a new Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed.

The reality of the first few formative years of the state was later obliterated from the history books, or at least modified by the system’s official ideologues to justify their actions. After the liberation, despite the fact that Tito and the Communist party won the war on a platform of federalism, they imposed a highly centralized state with a tightly controlled economy and monopoly of one party, ruled by an oligarchy led by a very powerful man.

It has to be stressed that there was a significant difference between Yugoslavia’s communism and the system implemented in the rest of the Central and Eastern Europe. In Yugoslavia, the Communists had a relatively broad support of the population. Tito’s partisans were a genuine native force, an indigenous movement, consisting mostly of dispossessed peasants who saw the war not only as a struggle for their lives, but also as the opportunity for their social emancipation. Their enthusiasm and support for the movement, was hardly matched by the bourgeois class concentrated in the big cities. Yet, any opposition to the new system was fraught with risk and dangers, as an all-powerful secret police enjoyed unrestricted powers of arrest, imprisonment and even execution without the public trial. Revolutionary terror was imposed toward all ideological boycott of the elections and demanding guarantees of Croatian sovereignty in the new state was banned. A huge number of voters were simply banned from casting ballots, under allegations of wartime collaboration with the Ustashash regime. In Serbia, the United Opposition, which consisted of Democrats, Agrarians, and Radicals, were labeled as “fascist émigrés” and subjected to physical threats and harassment. Their paper was also shut down before the election. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p. 230-1. See also Irvine, *The Croat Question*, p. 247. Some lost their lives; many lost only their property that was confiscated in the name of the people’. Settling scores with the ideological enemies was carried out in all parts of Yugoslavia with equal revolutionary zeal. Aleksandar Rankovic, the member of Tito’s inner circle, led the secret and all-powerful police, infamous *UDBa*, which filled the concentration camps with ideological enemies all over Yugoslavia. Although exact numbers are not available, Lampe concludes that rough estimates bring the number of people executed in the first two post-war years to five figures, and those held in concentration camps to six figures. Malcolm quotes Karapandzich and his estimate of 250,000 victims, however this figure has to be accepted with caution. This heavy repression has to be seen as an initial attempt to secure power and establish sovereignty. Once these challenges were overcome, the system behaved in much more benign way towards those who challenged its premises. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p. 238. Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History*, p. 193.
enemies of the new system. The new regime started its rule with an iron fist and bloody hands.\textsuperscript{4}

The first constitution was drafted by the main architect of the social system, Edvard Kardelj. It was a carbon copy of the Soviet Union’s constitution of 1935. Similar to a Soviet model, it nominally offered all democratic rights, such as the right to private property, freedom of speech, and religion. It contained even the right to organize different political parties. In reality all of these rights were non-existent. In a highly centralized state, the Communists controlled all institutions of the system, especially the press, paying close attention to ideological indoctrination of the population, and promulgating the cult of Tito and the Communist party.

The Communist party was not only the only party in the system, but it was also elevated above the law. The absolute majority in the new parliament - translated into absolute control over the state apparatus - was used during the next two years to solidify its unrestrained grip on power. As in the rest of Eastern Europe, those immediate post-war years were marked by the elimination of any political opposition, through executions or politically motivated trials, such as those of Mihajlovic and Stepinac.\textsuperscript{5} Both of these

\textsuperscript{4} The end of the war was marked by an incident that is still being discussed today, and which was exploited by the nationalistic forces, before and after the last Yugoslav war of 1991, especially in Croatia. The withdrawing anticommunist forces, accompanied with a number of civilians who did not want to risk falling under the victorious Communists, crossed the border with Austria in the region of Bleiburg in hope of surrendering to the Allied forces and ultimately reaching the West. However British officers disarmed the anti-communist forces and sent them back to Yugoslavia, together with the civilians. The reasons behind this decision are still a source of great controversy and remain fully unexplained. In the region of Bleiburg and Kocevje between 20 000 and 30 000 Serb Chetniks and Slovenian Home Guard, 36 000 Croats, members of the Ustasha and regular Home Guard Army, as well as 5000 Muslims faced mass execution without any trial. Evidence of this massive execution, carried out by the Partisans, was subsequently erased; the bodies of the executed were buried in the many caves of the karst terrain of the area. See Ramet, \textit{The Three Yugoslavias}, p.160.

\textsuperscript{5} Mihajlovic’s trial took part in mid 1946 after he had been located and arrested in March of 1946. He was charged with various war crimes, among which also collaboration with the Germans. He was sentenced to death and executed in July of 1946. Besides Mihajlovic, whose case was discussed in the previous chapter, Alojzije Stepinac, the Archbishop of Zagreb, was one of the war’s most controversial persons. At the beginning of the war he actively welcomed the establishment of the NDH. Soon, concerned with the level of brutality that was being unleashed, he privately protested massacres of the Serbs and Jews, as well as their forced conversions to Catholicism. He personally saved the lives of many Jews. Yet, despite of his private work, he never openly denounced Ustasha’s atrocities, during or after the war. After the war Tito tried courting him, suggesting he break with Vatican to form an autochthonous Croatian Catholic Church, which he categorically refused. Tito, well aware of the Vatican’s powers, and the role that the Catholic Church played in Croatian political discourse, would have liked Stepinac on his side. Stepinac refused to cooperate, and remained fiercely anticommunist, continuing to actively criticize the new authorities for the repression of the Church and the press freedoms. For the new authorities, that was too much. He was put on the trial in October of 1946 and was sentenced to 16 years of hard labor. He served only 5 years in
high profile trials were symbolic showdowns with the Croatian and Serbian nationalisms and their respective state projects.

Despite political plurality, which still existed on paper, the remains of the civil opposition and their activities were labelled as ‘anti-patriotic’ and ‘against the interest of the working class’. They were treated according to the words of Kardelj: “Democratic rights are not something absolutely valid for all times.” Soon afterwards, most of the pre-war political leaders decided to flee to the West. Those who stayed fought hard, until they were silenced by systematic and ruthless intimidation or a long jail terms. By 1947, Tito officially eliminated political pluralism, proclaiming it as a “superfluous” in the new social order.

All religious institutions were oppressed and harassed by new authorities - almost with crusaders’ zeal - according to the Stalinist doctrine of uprooting religion altogether and replacing it with a new atheist culture. Out of the three largest religious communities, the Catholics Church fared the worst because of collaboration of some of its clergy with the Ustasha regime, its connections with official Vatican (which harboured Pavelic and his inner circle and helped their escape) and because of its unbending anti-communist

comfortable prison and was thereafter allowed to reside in his native village, out of the public spotlight. Ramet argues that his trial was rather a stand-in for an absent, popular leader of Croatian Peasant Party, Vladimir Macek, who fled the country before the final act of liberation, and whose political reputation Communists wanted to discredit. Macek was potentially their main political opponent, who enjoyed the great deal of respect for rejecting the Hitler’s offer to lead NDH, as well as Pavelic’s repeated offers for collaboration. Moreover, sheltered by the Allies in Paris, he had been signaling his readiness to collaborate with Serbian civic opposition for a possible challenge to the communist system. Nevertheless, Stepinac’s staged trial, and his unbending anti-communist position, earned him the status of the first Croatian post-war political martyr. His tomb in Zagreb cathedral, marked by memorial designed by Mestrovic, became a shrine of Croatian nationalism. See Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, pp.166-187. Irvine, *The Croat Question*, p. 239. Goldstein, *Croatia, A History*, pp.136-9. See also Milovan Djilas, *Vlast*, Nasa Rec, London, 1983, pp.34-5.


8 The leader of the Serbia’s left wing Agrarian party Dragoljub Jovanovic protested the undemocratic methods and the absence of the standard legal procedure in the staged trials of the ideological ‘enemies of the state’, only to earn his own arrest and nine-year jail sentence. Milos Trifunovic, who served as prime minister in government in exile, together with Slovene Boris Furlane, and members of Croatian Republican Party Franjo Gazi and Tomo Janickovic were accused of giving important information to the American Embassy, arrested and sent to jail. They represent only a small number from a long list of civil opposition members silenced in this way. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p.170. Also see Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.238. Also, Djilas, *Vlast*, pp.29-37.

position it maintained after the end of the war. The other churches followed suit, only to a slightly lesser degree. Church property was confiscated, the clergy intimidated and harassed, sometimes even executed. All religious schools were closed, their press, charitable activities and various associations outlawed. With harsh measures implemented over the next few years, all religious institutions were infiltrated by communist loyalists and brought under control. However, in 1953, after a Law on religious Communities was passed, the general conditions of religious practices improved as schools were reopened, and many churches were rebuilt.

The national question was swept under the rug, dismissed as the “relic of old bourgeois society”. As such, it was considered finally solved with the establishment of a new state and the proclamation of the official ideology of “brotherhood and unity”. Opening any debate about the past, marked with many open wounds, was firmly rejected. For Yugoslavs, history officially began with 1941. On the other hand, within a couple of years, the new state was able to guarantee a safety and equality of all of its citizens. The expression of explicit nationalist ideas was unacceptable and would be severely punished, regardless of who initiated it. The multinational character of the country was guaranteed and rigorously imposed. All republics, all nations, as well as all citizens regardless of ethnicity and religion, enjoyed equal rights.

The Communists treated the national question along the lines of Marx’s theory and upheld its argument that nations would disappear upon the establishment of the socialist society and be surpassed by the solidarity of the working class. They followed

---

9 Perica quotes Hobsbawn when he argues that small native fascist regimes, such as the one in Croatia, would not be able to legitimize and fully establish their government without the unwavering support of the local Roman Catholic Church. The NDH did recruit a large number of state officials from the ranks of the local Catholic Church. Some of them even took part in the massacre of the civil population. Vjekoslav Perica, Balkan Idols, Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p.25. The Ustasha regime, together and the Germans fought to the bitter end. The Partisans liberated Zagreb only on May 8. 1945. While most of his rank and file soldiers were caught and executed by the Partisan forces, the man with bloodiest hands and the main architect of the cruel NDH regime was given shelter by the Vatican, together with his inner circle. Pavelic was at first given refuge in papal summer residence at Castelgandolfo, and later helped in emigrating to Spain and Argentina, where he lived until his death in 1961. The rest of his inner circle were also helped in emigrating and settling in various countries in Americas, Australia and Spain. See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.187.

10 That was the line that Yugoslav communists followed since 1920 when Sima Markovic, then a leading theoretician of the Party, defined the problem of Yugoslavia’s national question as nothing else but a struggle of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovene bourgeoisie for the economic primacy and the state power. This simplistic interpretation presumed that once the working class gained power, the national question would solve itself and simply disappear. See Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia, pp.408-410.
Stalin’s ‘pragmatic’ solution that national cultures were not a problem as long as they are “national in form, socialist in content.” The particular national cultures were not obliterated but rather tolerated as long as they fit in communist cast. What was accepted was the expression of the national culture that simultaneously confirmed Yugoslav identity and the acceptance of the otherness. This was the only time in the history of Tito’s state when its government got directly involved into the overseeing of cultural policy.

The idea of unified Yugoslav nation was never imposed by force, because of the bad experience of the First Yugoslavia. It was rather broadly based on the idea of Jugoslavenstvo, the nineteenth century Illyrian movement, now with a socialist connotation. The government launched various cultural manifestations and festivals. It established cultural awards that were to have a distinct Yugoslav character. Those events were supposed to enable Yugoslavs to mix and interact, under the umbrella of official ideology and within the common state. The communists saw the institutions of the new state: the Party, the Army, the cult personality of Tito as centripetal forces, without ever trying to strengthen the loyalty of the individual citizen towards the Yugoslavia’s imagined community.

---

12 Wachtel argues that canonization of Ivo Andric, as a main Yugoslav writer, even before he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1961, is not by accident, despite the fact that he was not a communist, and that his themes revolving around the complex image of the Bosnian past ignored the prescribed boundaries of socialist realism. On the contrary, Andric’s biography resembled the complicated ethnic picture and history of his native Bosnia and Yugoslavia. He was born into a Catholic family, yet as a young writer become a sympathizer of Young Bosnia and proponent of Yugoslav cultural unitarism. He declared himself as a Serbian writer and moved to Belgrade, where he made a meteoric rise in the ranks of the interwar government of the first Yugoslavia. Wachtel argues that Andric’s often-pessimistic vision of the South Slav past was embraced by the authorities since it confirmed the possibility and even inevitability of multicultural coexistence, offering a reconciliation of national and universal culture in a complex way. Andric paints an intricate picture of diverse civilisations who share the cultural intersection they inhabited, in constant change and often uneasy interaction: “…Each of the separate groups that inhabits Bosnia shares its historical space with other nations, and in that lays their brotherhoods and their unity. It is ultimately the paradoxical existence of an overreaching truth that links people and groups who think they share no common ground that becomes Andric’s central nation-building message…Andric does not claim that differences can be reconciled through synthesis; rather it can only be overcome by stepping outside and above it, by viewing it from the position of a nonnational but sympathetic observer”. See Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, pp.156-172.
14 This is maybe best defined by the editor of the influential weakly NIN: “Our ideal is that the culture of each Yugoslav people, while retaining its own characteristic, should simultaneously become the culture of all others in a dynamic, united totality.” See Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, p.134.
They hoped that the communist ideology itself could be the social glue able to keep the society together, taking eventually the role of supra-national identity. To achieve that, special attention was paid to education. Although after the 1948 there was no Federal Ministry of Education, as the republics were put in charge of educational policy, the authorities kept a firm hand on the content, making sure it is ideologically correct. The curriculum was purged of any religious references and populated by writers who had good ideological credentials. The country’s four official languages were also the official languages of instruction in schools.\textsuperscript{15}

Although Yugoslavia was a firmly centralized state the emphasis was on unity of the constituent nations. As contradictory as this was, the citizens were still seen solely as members of their respective nations. The German Romantic theories, according to which individuality was reached and fulfilled through the fusion with the collective of the nation and the state, even seeped into the ideology of communist post-war Yugoslavia. They overlapped well with communist theories that also demanded subjugation of the individual to the collective authority of the state. Wachtel explains:

“\textquotedblleft The state was understood to be constituted by agreements among the nations, rather than as an aggregate of individuals, each one of which had, in theory, a direct contractual relation to the state. In this context, personal and cultural realisation was conceived as possible only within the national envelope.\textquotedblright;\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} The Slovenian and Macedonian were recognized as separate languages and therefore became the official languages of instruction in schools in Slovenia and Macedonia. The rest of the country (except for large Hungarian and Albanian minorities) spoke stokavian dialect, of what was now to be called Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian language, which was practically Lingua Franca of the whole country. The unity of this language was never significantly challenged after the reforms of Illyrians and Vuk Karadzic on the end of the nineteenth century. During the war the NDH insisted on purity of the Croatian language purging it of the ‘Serbianisms’ that pervaded it. As a consequence of that, the new regime insisted on the unity of Serbo-Croatian language. The \textit{Novi Sad Agreement} was signed in 1954, by all major Serbian and Croatian linguists and writers, which declared that the national language of Croats, Serbs and Montenegrians (at that time the Bosnian Muslims were still not given the right to declare themselves as a separate nation) was a single language, with two sub-dialects (ijekavian and ekavian) and two alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic), equal in status. Wachtel, \textit{Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation}, p.140. See also Lampe, \textit{Yugoslavia as History}, p.237.

\textsuperscript{16} Wachtel, \textit{Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation}, p.132.
The Quarrel with Stalin

The first significant challenge to the new regime came in 1948. Yet, what was a serious challenge to the regime, proved to be a blessing for its constituency, as Yugoslavia was soon to be pushed into a different direction, away from the Soviet model of communism. Tito was Stalin’s agent who returned from Moscow to Yugoslavia just before the war to start the revolution. However, the Yugoslavian revolution, unlike in the rest of the Eastern Europe, was a homegrown movement and the product of native forces. Tito emerged victorious. As an increasingly self-confident leader, gifted with a remarkable political talent he wanted to be the boss in his own yard.17

Stalin, demanding a total obedience from his political subordinates, became irritated with increasingly independent Tito. Wanting to reduce him to the level of other East European puppet-leaders, he accused him of ideological heresy and of veering away from the path of communism. The disagreement led to an open conflict. Stalin was hoping to provoke trouble and start a mutiny in the ranks of the communist party whose members had been indoctrinated for years with the cult of his own personality and of the Soviet leadership role in the in communist world. He called upon the forces inside Yugoslavia loyal to Kremlin to criticize their leadership. There were also many Soviet officers, acting as instructors in Yugoslav Army, who tried to infiltrate the Army’s officers corps, and to challenge their allegiance to Tito. In the meantime Stalin’s tanks were idling in neighbouring countries, waiting for the order for a full invasion.18

17 Tito was urged by Stalin to ‘swallow’ Albania, after the war, as well as to forge a confederation with Bulgaria, as part of the larger Balkan federation that would ensure Moscow’s domination on the Balkans for years to come. Tito pursued the steps to bring Albania and Bulgaria into a Yugoslav federation, but in subordinate positions, as the seventh and eighth Yugoslav republics. Tito had his own reasons for this—mostly to resolve the question of large Albanian minority in Kosovo, as well as to solve the Macedonians’ ambiguity about their own nationality, since a large number of Macedonians at that time still considered themselves ethnic Bulgarians. What annoyed Stalin was that the Bled Agreement between Tito and Bulgarian president Dimitrov, paving the road for the costume union between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, was done without prior approval from Moscow. He also was displeased with Tito’s support for the Greek partisans in the ongoing Greek civil war. This directly undermined the deal he had struck with Churchill: to leave Greece to the West in exchange for a free hand in Bulgaria and Romania, therefore directly endangering the position of Soviet Union in relation to the West. See Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin, Harcourt, Brace& World, Inc., New York, 1962, pp.170-185.

18 Stalin had planned to invade Yugoslavia, but hostilities broke out on the Korean Peninsula. Tito, well aware that only the West can help him survive, quickly signed a foreign trade agreement with the Americans. That ensured quick help for Yugoslavia in food and promised imminent military help. As a result of US determination to get involved in the war in Korea and, with Tito in full control inside
Confronted by a defiant Tito, the Soviets severed all the ties with his regime; expelling it from the Cominform Stalin hoped to put additional pressure on the leadership and the country.\textsuperscript{19} The Yugoslavian leadership remained relatively unanimous and united behind Tito, partly out of personal loyalty developed during the war and partly because they were well aware that should Tito disappear, they would certainly face the same fate. Afraid of potential enemies within their own ranks, massive purges were carried out among the lower levels of the party. Those who had been indoctrinated for years with the Soviet leadership role in communist world and who could not understood how someone, who had been an inspiration and an ally, who enjoyed the status of a demigod, could become a mortal enemy, had to face the wrath of Rankovic’s secret police.\textsuperscript{20} Backed by the West, the regime survived the crisis, and in the aftermath of the storm, it was forced to look for new ways.

Yugoslavia, Stalin temporarily gave up his plans for an invasion. In February of 1951, Tito had already secured guaranties from the USA of military protection in case of an open aggression by the Soviet Union. In 1952 the USA and Yugoslavia signed an agreement on military assistance. There were also official plans prepared by Lavrenti Beria, the chief of infamous KGB, to assassinate Tito. They were scrapped because of the Stalin’s death in March of 1953. See Nora Beloff, \textit{Tito’s Flawed Legacy, Yugoslavia and the West: 1939-84}, Victor Golanzt, London, 1985 pp.144-149.\textsuperscript{19} Ramet notes that not even Stalin was immune to the power of the myth and the symbolism of certain dates. The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform (the international organisation of Communist parties) was staged on June 28 1948, the triple anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Gavrilo Princip’s assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, and the constitution of the first Yugoslavia. Ramet argues that this was not by accident, but a subtle message to Tito’s regime. See Ramet, \textit{The Three Yugoslavias}, p.177.\textsuperscript{20} More than 20 000 people were kept in a dozen concentration camps all over Yugoslavia, the most notorious one was on the desolate island off the Croatian coast with the evocative name of Goli Otok (The Naked Island). They were kept in inhuman conditions, condemned to forced labour, torture and starvation. About 400 never returned. Details about Goli Otok were made public only in the 1980’s. The most famous victim of party’s purges was the Croat Communist leader Andrija Hebrang. It was speculated that he had been Stalin’s choice to replace Tito. Yet, he was better known as someone who had challenged Tito, even during the war, as he continuously insisted on Croatian political autonomy. This made Tito nervous, since this was a factor that could affect Serbian political loyalty. Under the accusations that he conspired with Stalin against Tito, and even that he had collaborated with the Ustasha regime during the time he spent in their prisons, he was stripped of his position and placed in solitary confinement in a jail in Belgrade. Several months later the public was informed that he committed suicide, yet the rumours about his murder were never silenced. He was publicly fully rehabilitated only in 1990’s, yet for years he remained on the long list of Croatian martyrs. See Beloff, \textit{Tito’s Flawed Legacy}, p.145. Also see Irvine, \textit{The Croat Question}, pp.199-203.
The New Course

After the 1948 rift, Tito officially left the Soviet Block. Backed by American aid and funds, he began to pursue his independent goals. Lampe argues that only the raw struggle for political power - not ideological differences - were at the bottom of the split. Indeed, in reality, this was true until the mid sixties; Tito never abandoned the Soviet model, but rather provided it with a “human face”. The rift with Stalin boosted his popularity tremendously, at home and abroad. It offered Yugoslavia a chance to be fully accepted in the Western political realm, which would most probably transform Yugoslavia into a pluralistic society. Yet, that would certainly have challenged Tito and his party’s monopoly on power. For that, he was not ready.

He kept his dominance over every single political institution. Political freedoms and rights remained restricted, the media remained state owned and under strict control. Tito was a shrewd and pragmatic politician, but also the old type of communist. As one of his closest collaborators and later fiercest critics argued, he saw Yugoslavia as his own creation and identified country’s future with his own historical mission. Facing danger from the East from which he never ideologically truly divorced, he understood that he had to tie the fate of his country to the West that he never embraced earnestly.

The split with Kremlin forced Tito and his small inner circle to start looking for a new ideological underpinning of the system, in order to legitimize their governing. The authorities were now also pressed with the several catastrophic harvest failures and the active resistance towards imposed Soviet style collectivization, which resulted even in massive armed uprising in northwestern Bosnia. The Soviet inspired “dictatorship of the proletariat” was abandoned in favor of “self-management”, introduced in 1950. Under the new formula, the power of the ruling party was supposed to be delegated to the

---

21 Within a several weeks of Stalin’s economic boycott of Yugoslavia, the US released 30 million dollars worth of gold, which were deposited by the royal government before the war. In the course of 1950’s, American unconditional financial support reached two billion dollars, more per capita than any other country received. Americans also arranged the first of series of loans from the IMF and the World Bank. See Beloff, Tito’s Flawed Legacy, p.149.

22 “History and political struggles and political relations do not choose leaders; leaders choose them. Tito’s need for identification with history, with the deed in which he played the most pivotal role, was at once his strength and his weakness.” Milovan Djilas, Tito, The Story from Inside, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1980, p.36.

workers’ councils. They were to manage companies, economy and, ultimately, society as a whole, until the moment that the state “withers away”. Along with the “brotherhood and unity” and a new international course with the Non-alignment Movement, this was a new ideological ‘holy trinity’ that underpinned the redesigned Yugoslav political system.

On the international scene, on one of his numerous trips to the countries of Africa and Asia, Tito stumbled upon the idea of a Nonalignment movement. Together with Egypt’s president Nasser and India’s Nehru, he acted as a founder of the movement that rallied mostly African and Asian countries which did not belong to either of the two blocks already locked into the full blown Cold War. This move was supposed to demonstrate Yugoslavia’s independent foreign policy, its progressive attitude in finding a way to reconcile the East and West, and to satisfy Tito’s own aspiration to become a leader on the world stage. Although the movement and Tito’s role in it were often praised during the Cold War, at home it was often looked upon with a lot of sarcasm (as open public criticism was still unacceptable), and as the kind of move that took Yugoslavia farther away from the early western European integrations. However, this movement enabled the Tito to continue his fine balancing act between the East and the West. Both jointly continued courting him, while the game gave him huge economic and political benefits.24

The Reformists versus the Conservatives

In 1952, during the Sixth Party Congress, distancing himself further away from Stalin’s model of society, Tito proposed that the Party should restrain from the control of government. To reflect the change in course, the party was renamed the League of Yugoslav Communists. In 1952, at the Congress of Yugoslav Writers, Krleza’s speech marked the end of Social Realism in the realm of culture. He defended the right not only of writers but all artists to express themselves freely without any boundaries set by party

24 Stalin’s death brought some normalization with the Soviet Union, and an end to the trade embargo. Full normalization of relations during the Khrushchev era opened new markets for Yugoslavia. Tito was offered full admission to Soviet Bloc, which he adamantly refused. At the same time, the West - constantly kept on the edge by Tito’s anti-capitalist rhetoric in the Non-Aligned movement and the possibility of his return to the Soviet Military Block - continued showering him with loans and direct economical assistance. Finally, the membership in the Non-Aligned movement opened significant foreign markets in the Third World for the country’s products and secured lucrative business contracts for Yugoslavian companies.
and state. The first cracks in the otherwise-monolithic governing inner circle, now called the Executive Committee of Communist Party of Yugoslavia, emerged with the rift with the first and perhaps most influential dissident of the system, Milovan Djilas.  

The Djilas case is significant, not only because it showed the first cracks in what seemed to be a homogenous governing oligarchy but also because it established the pattern that the Yugoslav leadership seemed to pursue after 1950, every time it fell into crisis. After every demand for decentralisation and critique of the existing system, the ruling oligarchy at first moved to suppress and punish the perpetrator. Soon, however, perhaps aware of a need for change, or perhaps in the hope of appeasing challenging forces and undermining their wider support, the authorities would move in that direction. The beginning of the sixties will bring an entirely new course for the country, as after the Djilas affair, the reform forces will take initiative on the next turning point.

The short economic recession at the beginning of the 1960’s forced the leadership to adopt a new set of economic and political reforms accompanying the new Constitution of 1963. The new supreme law of the country further decentralized the state giving republics more power in every field including the administration of the economy. The republics were, for the first time, granted the right to leave Yugoslavia. Accordingly, more power was given to the communist parties of individual republics, as they were authorized by the centre to convene their party conferences before joint party meeting. Finally, in 1964, Tito announced, in a major public speech, that he was abandoning the idea of a single Yugoslav nation. Previously favoured idea of Jugoslavenstvo (Yugoslavism) was branded as equivalent to “assimilation and bureaucratic centralism, to unitarism and hegemony.”

---

25 Djilas was an intellectual and a maverick who, in a series of the newspaper articles, started pushing for faster decentralization and radical democratization of society. As a talented writer and, originally a member of the Tito’s inner circle, he was the regime’s chief propagandist. On one of his foreign trips to Great Britain, he met some members of the Labour Party, and was impressed by Britain’s parliamentary system. Disappointed by the methods used to deal with victims of Cominform purges, Djilas started challenging the logic behind one party rule. He accused Tito and his inner circle of taking all power for themselves and turning into a “self-serving bureaucratic caste”. His heresy was punished with exile from the inner circle and from the ranks of the party in 1954. Unbending in his criticism, he published several books with western publishers further criticizing the system, which ultimately earned him several years of prison after 1956. See Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.263.

Irvine argues that Tito and Kardelj believed that decentralisation was necessary for achieving the desperately needed economic reforms and to better manage national relations. The Party tried to conduct the reform in the economic sphere, while at the same time avoiding the reform of the political system and opening the discussion about its own position in society. Central planning was abandoned, empowering the republics, local municipalities and enterprises to have greater say in economic planning. The growing number of party liberals and technocrats, who argued in favour of a complete turn towards the full market economy and further reduction of party’s control of society, faced a sharp opposition from those who wanted recentralisation of the economical and political system.

Belgrade was designed after the war as a capital of an extremely centralized country, which meant that, even unintentionally, federal offices would be filled by Serbs. In the centralized economy, Belgrade was also designed as the centre of financial power. Several large banks were established there, as well as quite a few large companies which, thanks to political ties, enjoyed a monopoly in domestic and international trade and the development sector. The fact that Serbs were preponderant in the federal administration went with the fact that Aleksandar Rankovic, Tito’s influential minister of internal affairs and the chief of secret police, was filling the ranks of police and secret service with Serbs and Montenegrins. Once again, the interests of the Serb elite came to be aligned with centralized rather than federal Yugoslavia, and once again the others came to see this as their looming domination over the common state.27

It is worth pointing that by this moment every republic had liberals and conservatives in its ranks, though not in the identical numbers. The first clash between

---

27 Gleny argues that Rankovic was in fact less a Serbian nationalist, than a fanatical unitarist. Yet, unitarism became associated with Serbian nationalism, as they both had the same goal - the preservation of status quo that favored Serb elite: “It is true that there was much cross fertilization between Serb nationalist and conservatives in the Party, but the two were not synonymous.” Misha Gleny, The Balkans 1804-1999, Granta Books, London, 1999, p.580. Denitch argues that story about Serbian domination of the Yugoslav federation, after the fall of Rankovic was a myth, perpetuated and exploited by Croatian and Slovenian nationalists. The undeniable domination of Serbs (from Krajina) and Montenegrins in the officer corps and the police, after the late sixties was reversed, yet never totally eliminated. The numbers show that use of rigid ‘ethnic key’ assured equal distribution of all other federal appointments, between the representatives of all republics and provinces. This was a result of Tito’s careful policy of trying to keep the federal center from being dominated by any of the national groups, particularly the two largest ones, Serbs and Croats. The legitimate complaint could only exist “against the authoritarian Communist rule, as such, but that rule was essentially equally hostile to all nationalism.” Bogdan Denitch, Ethnic Nationalism, The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994, pp.37-8.
the two camps at the federal level emerged during the discussion about economical issues and the future political course for the country. The turning point for Yugoslavia and the liberals in all the republics came with the fall of Rankovic in June of 1966.\textsuperscript{28} He was one of Tito’s fiercest loyalist, but also the main obstacle to economic and political reforms. His removal was a signal to the liberals in all republics that they could push for further economic and political reforms, towards what was now called “market socialism”.\textsuperscript{29}

Yugoslavia’s ‘Golden Age’

Yugoslavia soon became the poster child of socialism. Showered with Western help disproportionate to the size of the country, but proportionate to its geo-strategical position, Yugoslavia quickly prospered. It became a much better place to live than any other Eastern European country. In the economic realm, the late fifties brought a wave of swift modernization and industrialization, although, following the communist doctrine, emphasis remained on heavy industries. In the mid sixties, with liberals at the helm,

\textsuperscript{28} Rankovic was feared chief of secret police UDBa, since 1954 called Service for State Security (SDB), and one of the main opponents of further decentralization. As Vice President of the country since 1963, and one of the Tito’s closest wartime associates, he was widely expected to be Tito’s successor, which made the other republics nervous. He was the main conservative of Tito’s inner circle, and the main obstacle to the economic and political reforms that were introduced in 1960’s. Ramet argues that the leadership was seriously torn between Kardelj’s version of “organic Yugoslavism” who argued distinctiveness and full accommodation of the Yugoslavia’s diverse groups, and Rankovic’s version of “integral Yugoslavism” who wanted to see development of a Yugoslav consciousness in the ethnic sense. However, it was also known that Rankovic’s version of Yugoslavism had distinctively Serbian overtones. By the time of his fall, accusations began mounting about the discriminatory practices of the secret police under his direct command, against non-Serbs in Croatia, Western Herzegovina and especially Kosovo. Accused of having abused his unchecked powers, for unauthorized surveillance of party leaders, including the bugging of Tito’s bedroom, he was removed from office and forced to withdraw from public life into comfortable retirement. Many have challenged the official reasons for his removal, considering his well-known devotion to Tito, as well as the fact that he remained silent about the whole incident until the end of his life. It was Tito who wanted to curb the power of UDBa, to keep it under his control and address the abuse of power that reflected negatively on national relations and the fate of economic reform. Yet, many Serbian conservatives saw his removal as a major slap in the face of Serbia and the centralist forces, adding a new martyr to their growing list of grievances. His funeral in 1983 was attended by 100 000 people and was the first public display of Serbian nationalism. See Sabrina Petra Ramet, \textit{Balkan Babel, The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War}, Westview Press, 1996, p.176. See also Beloff, \textit{Tito’s Flawed Legacy}, pp.195-6.

\textsuperscript{29} Liberals were coordinated on federal level by Vladimir Bakaric, a powerful member of Tito’s inner circle, who secured Tito’s support for the reforms.
moderate economic reforms were adopted, and overall liberalization of society took place.

Traveling restrictions were loosened and hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs, together with other Southern Europeans, were swallowed by the voracious appetite for labour of the German economic miracle. Remittances soon started arriving and further helped Yugoslavia’s modernization and development. Real incomes rose and were matched by a growing demand for foreign goods. Open borders and massive tourism from the West bolstered Yugoslavia’s economic fortunes and improved its general standard of living. The grip on the media was loosened, intellectual freedoms extended, and relationship with religious institutions was normalized.30

As Lampe argues, despite Communist monopoly on power, with the first tangible results of progress after the war, the prospects for an integrated Yugoslavia were still not dead. Yugoslavia was open to the World and that openness, with rising standards and rising levels of education in the new generations, students and professionals naturally pulled the country towards the European mainstream. Access to higher education improved considerably, with new universities opening across the country. Yugoslav scholars and students benefited from the different programs and exchanges offered form the West. Education was defined as a right rather than a privilege, and, being free and widely accessible, it ultimately exerted a positive impact on human capital. Several hundreds of Yugoslav enterprises obtained contracts across Europe and the Third World and became competitive by Western standards. Big cities became sophisticated centres emulating Western capitals, underlining the growing gap between city and countryside.31

---

30 The media were still seen as having an important social function and any criticisms of Tito or the one party system were censored and simply not acceptable. Yet, growing numbers of newspapers and magazines kept Yugoslavs well informed about the world and domestic affairs. Relations with the churches were normalized during 1960’s, and religious publications were allowed for the first time. All religious communities were allowed to build new - or restore old - churches and mosques. Lampe also point out that this was somewhat harder to achieve in the areas that favored Chetniks and Ustasahs over the Partisans during the war, which would affect Yugoslavia after the death of Tito. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, pp.293-4.

31 Unfortunately this social development was not matched in the rural areas. Although they did show a significant development of agricultural growth, they significantly lagged in educational levels. In contrast to the culturally sophisticated and cosmopolitan cities, rural areas remained the repository of patriarchal traditions and conservative values. This social gap between cities and rural areas created a permanent rift in society and contributed to their mutual antipathy, which prompted some commentators to see the recent war as the war between city dwellers and the villagers. Despite the compulsory eight years of primary education, rates of illiteracy countrywide remained at almost 20 %, in 1961. That number meant that
In the Cold War Europe polarized along East-West axes, Yugoslavs had equal chance to read books from the East as well as those coming from the West, without any restrictions. In the realm of high culture, luminaries such as Bloch and Marcuse, Fromm and Habermas, and many other adherents of the Frankfurt School, visited Yugoslavia, and, together with the theorists of the domestic *Praxis* group (gathering mostly Zagreb’s and Belgrade’s intellectuals), convened for their annual conference on the Croatian island of Korcula. \(^{32}\) Yugoslav movies of the so-called “Black Wave” were acclaimed in European art houses, while large international movie, theatre and music festivals were held in Yugoslavia.

Everyday popular culture was dominated by Western TV series, omnipresent Hollywood movies, and the phenomenon of popular music. Although the Church had returned to social life, it remained on the margins, mostly because of slipping religious belief, which continued to be a trend over next few decades.\(^{33}\) Ethnic nationalism was considered as a backward phenomenon, not only because of relatively long repression, but also because of Yugoslavia’s openness and identification with a larger European, truly cosmopolitan identity. This trend was re-enforced by rising living standards, unrestricted freedom to travel, and armies of western tourists frequenting the Adriatic coast. This was Yugoslavia’s ‘golden age’ and, despite all later difficulties and underlying system problems, it stuck in the popular mind and formed the basis of Yugoslavia’s imagined community. Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulic talking about multiple, parallel identities that Yugoslavs nourished for a next few decades, summarises:

“I have to admit that for me, as for many of my friends born after World War II, being Croat has no special meaning. Not only was I educated to believe that the whole territory of ex-Yugoslavia was my homeland, but because we could freely travel abroad (while people of the Eastern bloc countries couldn’t), I almost

---

\(^{32}\) From 1963 to 1974 (when it was banned by conservative faction which had regained control of the party) the so-called *Praxis* School published the internationally acclaimed journal of Marxist theory of the same name, critically examining the Yugoslav political experiment and Marxist theory from the point of view of “humanist Marxism”.

\(^{33}\) In 1964, 70% of population admitted holding religious beliefs; twenty years later, it slipped to 45%. The decline was sharpest among the Orthodox believers and slowest among the Catholics. See Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.294.
believed that borders, as well as nationalities, existed only in people’s heads. Moreover, the youth culture of 1968 brought us even closer to the world through rock music, demonstrations, books and the English language. We had so much in common with the West that in fact we mentally belonged there.”  

With the constitution of 1963, federalization of the centralized state was accepted as a solution to the crisis and as a way to reform society. The communist ideologues equated national equality with republic sovereignty. The Constitution for the first time guaranteed to the republics, not only a right to secession, but also the liberty to engage with each other without consulting the federal government. Cultural politics also followed this new vision for the country.

Cultural diversity was fully embraced and promoted as a sign of country’s wealth and strength. The leadership embraced the official policy of multiculturalism, abandoning any firm center. The issue of culture, as everything else, was left in the administrative domain of each republic. As Wachtel suggests, from here, the individual was simply forced to exercise his cultural rights in the realm of his respective nation. As demonstrated in previous arguments the Yugoslav cultural orientation was still not abandoned, yet cultural particularism was given the powerful set of tools to dismantle the former concept.

The republic’s elites had gradually taken the initiative to pursue separate educational curricula; most noticeably in the way that language and literature were taught. The comparison of these programs in 1964, already pointed to a trend that was to accelerate in the next few decades. The Croatian and Serbian school programs were mirror images of each other. They each emphasized Croatian and Serbian writers respectively, ignoring or excluding others or replacing them with foreign authors. The revolutionary texts devoted to Tito and to the partisan struggle were still omnipresent and were almost the only things connecting these increasingly diverging curricula. The curriculum in Bosnia remained somewhat different, reflecting the Bosnia’s unique ethnic

35 Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, p.174.
mix, the cultural connections with Serbia and Croatia alike, and the importance of Yugoslavism in this republic.36

It is still debated why Tito and his inner circle took such a sharp turn in such a short period of time. Misha Gleny and Nora Beloff accuse Tito and Kardelj of ‘divide and rule’ tactics; manipulating different national groups and using their antagonism as the best way of consolidating their personal power.37 Beloff argues further that, considering the Yugoslavia’s ethnic mix, and a communist desire not to be alienated from their constituency while avoiding a real political reform, it was only matter of time before centrifugal forces would make themselves felt again. She quotes Djilas’ metaphor in which he compared Yugoslavia’s system with the Ottoman millet system. Local groups (in this case republic’s oligarchies) would be granted with unrestricted autonomy, as long as they were ideologically loyal to the political center and did not challenge its supreme authority. Magas argues that Tito and Kardelj wanted to address the growing Serbian influence over the Yugoslav state.38 Lampe argues that devolution of Communist power to the level of republics was only an illusion of democratic reform, a substitute for a real political reform that could not be accomplished without a loss of monopoly on power.39 Ramet agrees, arguing that the Communists were reluctant reformers desperately looking for political legitimacy. It was obvious that in an open country as Yugoslavia, the status quo could not be maintained. Yet the reform that did not yield any substance, but rather served as a mask for the ruling elite’s grip on power, was doomed to fail.40

The Croatian Spring and the Serbian Liberals

Wachtel is right when he argues that cultural nationalism preceded the nationalist political movement, as will be seen when we consider the position Croatia found itself in at the end of sixties - and Serbia two decades later. In both cases, the “nationalist political

36 Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, pp.179-181.
40 Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.207.
movement rose on the back of cultural ones, rather than the other way around.\textsuperscript{41} Still, this should not be interpreted in the sense that nationalistic intellectuals and artists created the national question, but that they rather used underlying fatal flaws of the system to formulate it.

Following the fall of Rankovic, centralism and an insistence on a single Yugoslav identity began to be identified with unitarism and Greater Serbian nationalism, which, for the first time after the war, signalled that disputes regarding political legitimacy were being translated into the language of nationalism and increasingly being perceived as ethnic rather than political battles.\textsuperscript{42} In the much more relaxed atmosphere after the fall of Rankovic the broad coalition of liberals from every republic started aligning themselves into coalitions along the lines of economic interest. The end of the 1968 saw them joined by the internationally oriented group of intellectuals who took over Serbia’s League of Communists. All conditions seemed to favour a fundamental political change in Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia’s openness to the world would eventually spark the change. The decade of the turbulent sixties in Europe was echoed in the protests of students in Yugoslav universities in 1968. The first demonstrations in Belgrade had nothing to do with the national question, but rather challenged one-party regime and demanded greater democratization of society. The national issue surfaced at first with the student demonstrations in Serbia’s province of Kosovo and then in Croatia, where it took on the shape of the massive movement. The same social and national issues had never been discussed in an open democratic debate in Tito’s state. They emerged once again, after twenty years, to haunt Yugoslavia.

\textsuperscript{41} Wachtel, \textit{Making the Nation, Breaking the Nation}, p.184.
\textsuperscript{42} The first national conflict came as an economic struggle over the division of state revenue and disputes over placements of federal investment. All republics, except Bosnia, were dominated by a single nation, so the distribution of federal funds suddenly could be turned into a national issue. Underdeveloped republics demanded larger shares of federal funding in order to foster development and address lagging living standards in their populations, while more developed Slovenia and Croatia argued that investment should be concentrated in their territories as it would produce better returns, benefiting the whole country. All provincial parties were internally divided, as liberals and conservatives were present in each one of them (not in the same numbers). Yet liberal arguments coincided with Croatia’s and Slovenia’s interests and conservative with the interest of the Republic of Serbia, further complicating the whole issue. Ramet, \textit{The Three Yugoslavias}, p.216.
The re-emergence of national sentiment in Croatia came on the wings of a massive cultural movement, so called *Maspok*, initiated by the ‘*Matica Hrvatska*’ (*Croatian Literary Society*, hereafter *Matica*), which gathered most of the intellectual and cultural figures of the time. In the next couple of years, it was fully embraced and backed by the Croatian League of Communists’ liberal leaders Savka Dapcevic-Kucar and Mika Tripalo. The movement was nationalistic in appearance because its rhetoric revolved around the common theme of Croatian national grievances, yet it demanded broader democratic reforms. It posed most serious challenge to the regime, having unintentionally a fatal impact on the fate of Yugoslavia’s reforms.

In an already relaxed public atmosphere, even a number of non-communists were encouraged to participate in the debate on political and economic reforms. Croatian intellectuals started voicing cultural complaints, advocating the protection of the Croatian language that, according to them, was being constantly serbianized. The incident that sparked the movement was the publication of the first two volumes of the new dictionary of Serbo-Croat Language, in which Croatian was treated only as a dialect of Serbian. Public protest of writers and prominent intellectuals followed demanding that the Novi Sad Agreement on the Serbo-Croatian language be renounced. Besides that, demands were put forth for the recognition of a separate Croatian literary language, and guarantees for its public use. While quarrels over language sparked public discussion and

43 After the Novi Sad agreement in 1954 when the unity of the Serbo-Croatian language was proclaimed, an effort was made to produce a common orthography for the entire country, as well as a comprehensive Serbo-Croat dictionary. *Matica Srpska* (Serbian Literary Society) persuaded the others that they were best suited to do the job. When the first two volumes of dictionary appeared thirteen years later, in 1967, they greatly offended the Croatian public and its intellectual elite. Common Croatian expressions were downgraded to the status of dialect, while the Serbian variant was given primacy. That provoked a massive public outcry in Croatia, even the left-wing writer Miroslav Krleza, a true internationalist and antinationalist, joined the protest of Croatian linguists. Irritated by the *Matica Srpska* position that Croatian was only a dialect of Serbian, *Matica Hrvatska* withdrew unilaterally from the project and initiated a separate project to produce a Croatian Orthography and a Croatian Dictionary. And, as is always case with the politically motivated efforts, when the dictionary and the orthography appeared a few years later, it resulted in the elimination of anything that even remotely could be seen as Serbianism, and therefore was filled with linguistic anachronisms. As Ramet puts it: “From a purely linguistic point of view, one might observe that Serbo-Croatian was “obviously” a single language; but this was a political, not a linguistic-scientific controversy” Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia*, Indian University press, 1984, p.109-114. Also See Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.307-8.

44 *Matica Hrvatska* put the demand that Serbian and Croatian should be considered as separate languages and that all public servants, teachers and officials should be forced to use the Croatian literary language in public. This was obviously aimed at the Serbs, working in public offices and had an “overtly anti-Serbian flavor.” Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia*, pp.108-9.
arguments with *Matica Srpska (Serbian Literary Society)*, Matica Hrvatska - joined by the new assertive player in public discourse, the Catholic Church - compiled the long list of other Croatian frustrations and resentments.

They argued that Croatia was being exploited economically, quoting Croatia’s disproportional contribution to the federal development fund. They also claimed that the Belgrade banks absorbed all foreign currency revenues from the profitable tourism industry and that Belgrade based enterprises enjoyed a monopoly on Croatia’s tourist industry.\(^{45}\) The demands put forward also advocated a further decentralization of the political system, from the establishment of a loose confederation where republics would have all the rights, including the right of secession, to a new monetary policy in which a republic could control its tax revenues. In the realm of culture they claimed that the Croatian language and culture in general were endangered and, as such, in need of protection.

The movement inevitably touched on the sensitive issue of Serbian predominance in Croatian political life, the republic’s institutions and the membership of the police force, which was a result of the higher Serb membership in the Communist Party of Croatia, reflecting their greater participation in the partisan forces during the war. Despite the best efforts of the communist liberal leaders to keep the movement under their control, it soon took another turn for the worse, as it became colored with distinct anti-Serb overtones. It was impossible that the large Serbian minority within Croatia, scarred by memories of WW II, would remain unaffected by these developments.\(^{46}\) They now started questioning their future status in Croatia, speaking through their cultural society,

\(^{45}\) As we have seen in chapter three Zagreb established itself as the banking center of the first Yugoslavia in the interwar period, a role it lost in the second Yugoslavia. According to leading Croatian nationalist and economist Sime Djodan, Belgrade’s several big banks controlled all economic credits and resources. Between themselves they controlled more than a half of total credits and 81.5% of foreign credits. Although Croatia, thanks mostly to its profitable tourist industry, brought in 50% of foreign income, it controlled only 15% of it. Belgrade foreign trade companies controlled 77% of Yugoslavian income in trade, Slovenian companies another 19.4%, and while Croat companies controlled only 2.4%. In any democratic country this would have been seen as an economic issue that could be solved in a discussion about the allocation of funds and capital. Yet in a politically controlled economy, where political influence translates into economic power, this anomaly was translated into the language of nationalism. Croats started seeing the problem of a dysfunctional centralized economy as their exploitation. Moreover, they saw “not only that they were being exploited but also that they were being exploited as Croats” Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p.229.

Prosvjeta (The Enlightenment). They started asking for special constitutional guaranties of their status, as they saw Croatia moving towards secession.

The most controversial claims put forth by Matica, regarded sovereignty and the demand for separate military forces. Subscribing to the notion of ethnic nationalism even within a communist country, Matica claimed that “sovereignty must reside in the Croat nation and only in the Croat nation, and it must extend to the all parts of Croatia.” This insistence upon one-nation, one-state principle motivated the Serb minority in Croatia to argue that, in the case of a further federalization of Yugoslavia, it would seek new guarantees for its status in Croatia, in a form of cultural and even territorial autonomy. This was firmly rejected by Croatian political elites: “Croatian leaders wanted a more federal state, but under no circumstances did they accept a federal Croatia.” These unraveling events proved that the communist state could not solve the conundrum that “lay at the hart of Yugoslavia’s national question: the status of Croats as a minority in Yugoslavia, and the Serbs as a minority in Croatia.”

Over the four years of national revival, commonly called the “Croatian Spring”, Maspok had become a highly influential and popular movement. The numbers in the movement swelled as people embraced the opportunity to talk freely and to air their grievances. Croatia’s liberal communist political leadership at first only followed the popular movement set in motion by group of nationalistic intellectuals, however they

---

47 Towards the end of WW II, one of the main partisan ideologues, Mosa Pijade, proposed to Tito that Croatian Serbs be rewarded for their role in the war, by creating one or more autonomous regions, within the new Croatian republic, in an effort to force a final solution of Serbian question in Croatia. Tito faced with the protests from Croat Communists’ leadership rejected this; concerned that the move would be extremely unpopular with the broader Croatian population. Instead, he opted for a complicated set of ethnic checks and balances that would guarantee national equality in the new state, while offering security to the Serb minority. The Serbs maintained their preponderance in the Republican Party and, subsequently, in the republic’s administration, and were encouraged to realize their political goals within Croatia. At the same time guarantees of strong cultural ties with their brethren in Serbia proper were given through arguments that, in the new centralized state, republican borders would not be equated with real autonomy and therefore were meaningless. Irvine argues: “the lack of explicit guarantees of Serb cultural and political autonomy was accepted by Serbs only as long as centralized arrangements prevailed”. However, for Croats this was a constant reminder of the Serbian upper hand, even in the second Yugoslavia. With the shift in power from the federation to the republics this emerged as a problem, proving that communists were unable to resolve the national question and defuse long-standing tensions between Serbs and Croats in Croatia. Irvine, The Croat Question, pp.225-236.


50 Membership in Matica Hrvatska soared from around 2000 members in 1970 to 41 000 members in forty-five branches by November of 1971 Weekly newspaper published by Matica had a circulation more than 100 000. Ramet, Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, p.128.
soon fully embraced the agenda advocated by Maspok. Indeed, Matica Hrvatska almost established itself as the parallel party, the replacement for an absent political option in a one-party state. Nationalism was suddenly perceived in the popular imagination as a legitimate ideology and the tool for opposing totalitarianism and the one-party rule. The liberal communist leadership was riding the nationalistic wave that swept Croatia. Very soon they were to prove that they did not control the party, nor the popular movement.

By 1971 Tito had enough of Maspok. The expressions of nationalism were tolerated as long as they were seen as a strictly national revival within the boundaries of the cultural and political autonomy of the federal unit, granted with reforms at the beginning of the decade. Tito was reassured several times by the liberals that they were in control, and that the stability of the system was not in question. However, the quarrel with the Serb minority about its status in Croatia was now coupled with the sudden Croatian claims over Bosnian territory. Matica claimed that Croats in Bosnia were systematically repressed and underrepresented in the Bosnian political structures.

Slowly, they started arguing that the only way to a solution to this question was the incorporation into Croatia of those territories where Croats were a majority (Western Herzegovina). Soon, the claims broadened to the rest of ‘Croatian historic territory’, in Vojvodina and Montenegro. The Croatian communist leadership, now faced with loud protest from the other republican leaders, realized that things had gone too far. But, a retreat at this point would have meant losing popular support. Thus, it became clear to already-alienated Bakaric, and to Tito, that the Communist leadership has lost control of the situation and that Matica was behaving as a well-organized political organisation that managed to impose its own platform onto that of the Communist Party.\footnote{Dennison Rusinow, \textit{Yugoslavia, Oblique Insights and Observations}, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2008.p.130.}

Claims on the territorial integrity of the other republics alienated their republican leaders, and irritated Tito who, at this juncture, saw too many similarities to the events of 1941. So, Tito decided to put an end to it.

As the ultimate arbiter in any disagreement, Tito rejected any demands for federal reform and further democratization and, especially, the re-opening the national question
and the re-designing of borders. He purged the leadership of the party, replacing them with communist hardliners loyal to him. The following year he removed, in the same way, the so-called Serbian Liberals, leaders of the Communist League of Serbia, led by Marko Nikezic and Latinka Perovic. These democratic reformers were rather anti-nationalists. They supported the Belgrade student movement in 1968, argued for democratic reforms of the entire federal structure, and a full turn towards a market economy. They also had been inclined to get rid of the ballast of Serbian Yugoslavism, and argued cooperation with the other republics.

Considering requests for democratization and modernization coming from other republics, they could have taken Serbia - and Yugoslavia - in a different direction. Ironically they were replaced by conservatives, mostly unknown cadres, ideologically much closer to Rankovic. By the end of 1972, the axe had fallen on the liberal leaders of

---

52 Tito and his inner circle, without any public discussion, drew new internal borders right after the war. They generally respected the historical borders of every republic, however several areas remained points of controversial debate. With the gain of the Istrian Peninsula, Croatia was enlarged at the expense of Italy, and a large Italian population of 250,000 was pushed into exodus to Italy. The gain in the north of Adriatic was compensated with the loss in the south, where the Bay of Kotor, because of the large Montenegrin population, was given to Montenegro. Division of the area of Srem solved the border dispute between Croatia and the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina, leaving a large number of Croats in Serbia as well as Serbs in Croatia. This territory, historically part of Slavonia, became part of Yugoslavia in 1918. It was given by Cvetkovic-Macek Agreement to Croatian Banate and later incorporated into the NDH, while heavily populated by Serbs. The Province of Kosovo, heavily populated by Albanians, who were not supporters and had not been participants in Tito’s partisan struggle, was given the status of autonomous province, in order to appease them, yet raising the eyebrows of Serbs. Tito made clear that his decisions were final and that the issue of borders would not be reopened again. Yet, the boundaries set this way would influence events several decades later. Djilas also argued that the new capital to be moved from Belgrade to Sarajevo, solution was rejected on the basis of insufficient infrastructure. Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.221-2. See also, Irvine, The Croat Question, pp.222-224.

53 The response of the regime was heavy-handed. After the fall of Dabcevic-Kucar, Tripalo and Pero Pirker, more than 1000 party members were ejected from the ranks of the party. The nationalist leadership of the Maspok movement was put in jail for number of years. Among others, Franjo Tudjman, the future Croatian president, and some of the prominent members of his future party were sentenced to long jail terms. Massive purges took place in all cultural institutions. Matica Hrvatska was shut down, as well as many of its publications. The Catholic Church was looked at with suspicion once again. Such a heavy-handed response only drove the movement underground, threw Croatia into apathy and resignation, and reassured nationalistic Croats in their argument that the solution of the Croat question could not be found within the frame of Yugoslavia. See Lampe Yugoslavia as History, p.310. Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.259.

54 Nikezic and Perovic adopted the principle of non-meddling in the affairs of other republics. Instead they rather focused on ‘cleaning in front of their own door’, a trait strikingly absent from any nationalistic agenda. They focused on criticism of Serbian nationalism and Serbian hegemonic tendencies within Yugoslavia. They also defended Croatian liberals from Tito’s criticism, arguing non-interference in their affairs and arguing that Croats should be allowed to decide about their own affairs, as only that would produce lasting solutions. It is probably thanks to their efforts that, despite the fact that some rural Croatian Serbs, under the influence of few members of the Belgrade media) become agitated and started an anti-Croat campaign. Most of the Serb population, despite heated nationalistic rhetoric of Maspok, stayed reserved. Magas Croatia Through History, pp.647-8.
Macedonia and Slovenia. It appeared that Tito had disliked democrats as much as he disliked nationalist. He clung to his personal power.\textsuperscript{55}

The Maspok legacy is mixed. On the one hand it posed the first and most serious, challenge to one party rule and gave voice to the wide dissatisfaction of the part of the population felt towards the system itself. It loudly demanded broad democratization of society and the end of the one-party rule. On the other hand, it proved how slippery the slope of nationalism could be. At first, liberal communists, who could hardly be accused of nationalism, embraced what looked like a national cultural renaissance, but soon they lost control.\textsuperscript{56}

Lampe rightly argues that most serious consequence of the Croatian crisis was that it gave Tito and Kardelj the chance to get rid of the liberal leadership of Serbia’s communist party.\textsuperscript{57} Considering the fact that Serbs were the largest nation in Yugoslavia, and Serbia its most populous republic, with the greatest clout on the federal level and a long history of centralism and unitarism, the emergence of a leadership that was genuinely inclined towards a federal Yugoslavia of equals, was a fact of crucial importance. With the rest of the liberal leadership in Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia, Serbian liberals could have turn country towards workable arrangement.

The Bosnian Question

Bosnia with its complicated history and elaborate ethnic quilt remained a peculiar case even in the new communist state. As already stated, the Communists decided to reconstitute Bosnia as a sixth republic, while denying Bosnian Muslims the full status of nation, granting them instead one of a distinctive group. Its first constitution defined

\textsuperscript{55} In her interview with Ramet in 2004, Latinka Perovic, still argued: “The Croatian Spring was not about nationalism. It was about reform of the system. We (Nikezic and I) were ready for dialogue with the Croats. We wanted the Croats to state their views in federal forums…The conservatives were worried that we would find a modus vivendi with the Croatian liberals and that is why we were removed from power.” Perovic as quoted in Ramet, \textit{The Three Yugoslavias}, p.261.
\textsuperscript{56} The main leader of the Croatian Communist Party, Mika Tripalo insisted that this was not an expression of the struggle between Croats and Serbs: “The origins of the conflict were socio-economic and the national problems emerged as a consequence…This was a battle between etatism and self-management, between dogmatism and democratic socialist ideas.” Tripalo as quoted in Gleny, \textit{The Balkans}, p.591.
\textsuperscript{57} Lampe, \textit{Yugoslavia as History}, p.309.
Bosnia as the “people’s state of republican form” without even mentioning its constitutive nations. This might have indicated an initial attempt to solve the Bosnia question along the lines of civic nationalism and define it as the state of its citizens, regardless of their nationality. Or, it could indicate the difficulty in constituting Bosnia as a separate republic. The Serbs were majority of the Bosnian population, and they had been overwhelmingly predominant in the WW II partisan forces. They had to be persuaded to accept the independence of Bosnia. Tito won over the Bosnian Serb leadership by giving it guarantees of strong ties to Serbia, and making the Serbs “very much first among equals.”

In the two decades since the mid-fifties Bosnia underwent rapid industrial growth, accompanied by increased urbanization. Nevertheless, in economic terms the republic was still lagging behind the most of Yugoslavia. Because of its rich mineral resources and its geo-strategical position in the heart of Yugoslavia, the communists designated it as an ideal location for heavy and military industry. During the decades of 1970-1980, following further economic decentralization, under the Mikulic-Pozderac regime, Bosnia’s economy caught up with the rest of the country, although large investments, often politically motivated, relied on borrowed money. The large boost in pride, as well as a huge public investment in infrastructure, was crowned by Sarajevo being chosen to host the 1984 Winter Olympic Games.

The late economic boom and increased urbanization would have a paradoxical effect on Bosnian cities. They were traditional environment in which Bosnians’ tolerant multiethnic coexistence thrived. This was the main factor that could strengthen the Bosnian polity and guarantee its future unity. In the stable environment of the communist state, Bosnians continued to mix, fully embracing their secular identity and further obscuring their ethnic differences. Mixed marriages were an ordinary phenomenon in the

---

58 Some communist leaders argued that Bosnia should be given the same status of autonomous province as Vojvodina, and not a full status of republic as Serbia and Croatia. Nearly two thirds of all Bosnian partisans were Serbs, that percentage being even higher in the early stages of partisan struggle. As a result, the three most senior posts in the Bosnian state (President, Prime Minister and the President of the Party) were held by Serbs. Even Muslims who held public appointments often declared themselves as Serbs (62 % of them). Serbs were also predominant in the new republic’s administration, reassuring the Serb population that they would not be threatened by a non-Serb majority in the new Bosnian state. Marco Attila Hoare, The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day, Sagi Books, 2007, p.317. See also Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, p.317.
Bosnian cities, where, by 1990, almost 40 percent of urban couples were ethnically mixed. Economic development produced the movement of the large mass of villagers, who had more sectarian consciousness, into cities. Paradoxically, it led to the ruralization of the cosmopolitan cities, which proved unable to absorb the large rural populations, in such a short period of time.

The full recognition of Muslim nationality would take a few decades. At the end of the 1960’s, as a consequence of the already mentioned reforms, Yugoslavism, which was never imposed on anyone, was abandoned in favor of particular national identities. In Bosnia this would result with the full recognition of the Bosnian Muslims as a distinct nationality in 1968. During those years there was an important shift in national composition of Bosnia. Muslims were not only recognized as a full-fledged nation, but also became the most numerous Bosnian nationality.

The reasons for this were mixed. Right after the war, the Communist regime promoted colonization of the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina, whose fertile lands and extensive agricultural infrastructure lay abandoned after the large German population, almost half a million strong, burdened with the collective guilt for German war crimes, was expelled from the country. Titles on land and property were given, as a reward for their war participation, to the members of the partisan forces from the poorest regions of the country, mostly Herzegovina and southern Krajina, whose karst lands

59 Villages on the other hand remained ethnically segregated and often keepers of the memories of the ethnic conflict of the Second World War, harboring animosity towards city culture. Here mixed marriages were much less common. Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina, A Tradition Betrayed*, pp.185-187.
61 At that time the Bosnian Muslims enjoyed full rights, equal to any other citizen of the country, yet they could not declare themselves in national terms. In 1948, on the first post-war census, the Bosnian population was given a choice of declaring their nationality as Serb, Croat, or “undeclared”. 89% of Muslims identify their nationality as undetermined, 8.5% as Serb and 3.5% as Croat. This confirmed that the national identity of this community was firmly established. In 1953, the second census offered the “Yugoslav, undetermined” option instead of ‘undeclared’. Muslims again overwhelmingly chose this option, confirming the existence of national consciousness. The census of 1961 offered the option of “Muslim in the ethnic sense” indicating that authorities were already treating Muslims as a national group, while the Bosnian constitution of 1963 confirmed that by mentioning Muslims explicitly as the constitutive nation of Bosnia, along with Croats and Serbs. Hoare, *The History of Bosnia*, p.327. See also, Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History*, p.198-9.
62 In 1967 partisan veteran and distinguished university professor Muhamed Filipovic called for the recognition of the Muslim nation, only to be expelled from the party. Yet, one year later, the Central Committee of the Party argued in favor of the very same argument. In the next census, in 1971 the Bosnian Muslims were free to declare themselves as Muslims in national terms. Hoare, *The History of Bosnia*, p.329.
could not be cultivated.\textsuperscript{63} Several subsequent waves of emigration from Bosnia followed. During the 1970’s, with increased economic development, the Serbs and the Croats started moving away to the big industrial centers of Serbia and Croatia proper. This sudden shift gave the Muslims demographic predominance, which coupled with their higher birth rate inevitably resulted in the change of political power.\textsuperscript{64} This shift of power away from Bosnian Serbs would produce the gradual drift of their loyalty towards Belgrade, instead of Sarajevo.

The demographic shift was accompanied by a brain drain from Bosnia, as many intellectuals left for Zagreb and Belgrade, dissatisfied with a rigid communist ideology that persisted in Bosnia much longer than in the rest of the country.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed, the Bosnian party leadership and its government adhered for the longest time to communist orthodoxy. Other republics’ leaderships perceived it as more conservative, since even during the liberal sixties, it argued for recentralisation of the political authority. The aims on Bosnian territory by the nationalistic leaders of Matica Hrvatska during the ‘Croatian Spring’, as well as protests by the father of modern Serbian nationalism, Dobrica Cosic, over the recognition of Muslims as a separate nation, only reconfirmed to the Bosnian leadership that demands on Bosnian territory and its identity were alive and well. They were soon joined by the demands of newly self-confident Muslim nationalists who started arguing that Bosnian sovereignty should be based upon the sovereignty of the Muslim nation as dominant, as in any other Yugoslav republic.\textsuperscript{66} The decision to maintain the fragile Bosnian ethnic balance by repression would result in the prosecution of real or imagined nationalists on several occasions, from every national corps.\textsuperscript{67} If, in the mid

\textsuperscript{63} 78 586 people, or 3.29 \% of the total Bosnian population were settled in Vojvodina in the first two years after the war. 98 \% of them were ethnic Serbs from poorest regions of Bosnia. Hoare, \textit{The History of Bosnia}, p.330.

\textsuperscript{64} From 1948 to 1971 Serbs were responsible for 54.5\% of net migration from Bosnia, Croats for 28.9\% and Muslims for only 4.5\%. None of these migrations were forced, or the aftermath of any kind of pressure or oppression, as national equality was always imposed without any compromise. People simply left because they were motivated by better job opportunities in more prosperous neighboring republics. By 1971 the Bosnian population was 39.6\% Muslim, 37.2\% Serb, and 20.6\% Croat. Muslims were now not only dominant in number, but also had a younger population than Croats and Serbs. Hoare, \textit{The History of Bosnia}, p.331.

\textsuperscript{65} The two most famous dissidents were Bosnian Muslim intellectuals, poet Skender Kulenovic and novelist Mesa Selimovic, both left for more liberal Belgrade.

\textsuperscript{66} Ramet, \textit{The Three Yugoslavias}, p.292.

\textsuperscript{67} In August of 1983 thirteen Bosnian Muslims were tried in Sarajevo on charges of intentions to transform Bosnia into Islamic state. Jail term of 14 years was given to first president of the future Bosnian state, Alija
1970’s, nationalism was seen as legitimate form of political expression in any other republic, in Bosnia it was always denounced and treated with suspicion and zero tolerance.

The communists’ initial solution of five constitutive nations and six republics would eventually produce an anomaly. Although Bosnia was constituted as a republic, equal to others, it was to be the only one that was not “nationally defined”. The problem appeared after the Constitution of 1963, when power was delegated to the republics. Over the next decade, all other republics would be seen as the states of their respective dominant nations, while Bosnia remained defied as a homeland of the three equal nations, the Muslims, Serbs and Croats, as well as other ethnic minorities who lived there. Right after WW II in the centralized state, where internal borders were no more than administrative boundaries, and nationality held no clout, this was possible. With decentralization - especially after the Constitution of 1974 turned the sovereign republics practically into nation states - the political center lost all powers. This new reality proved to be an intractable problem that would ultimately lead to war because the claims of Serbian, Croatian and Muslim nationalists on Bosnian territory were irreconcilable.

The Last Constitution

After the showdown with liberals, Tito purged the ranks of every republican party and removed all liberals from leadership, replacing them with conservative loyalists. So, if liberalization went into reverse, decentralization never did. In order to appease discontent and undermine future potential support for movements such as Maspok, he

---

Izetbegovic. Donia argues that this obviously staged trial was the work of the Bosnian secular Muslim leadership, overzealous to prove itself guarantor of the secular identity of the newly recognized Bosnian Muslim nation. Izetbegovic served six years, yet his case was later used by Serbian and Croatian nationalists to accuse Izetbegovic and Bosnian Muslims of religious fanaticism. See Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina, A Tradition Betrayed*, p. 201. In 1984 Vojislav Seselj was prosecuted for his Serbian nationalistic writings and given a jail term. He later moved to Belgrade and became one of the most extreme nationalistic politicians and leader of the paramilitary forces, which committed many crimes, and did the ‘dirty work’ of ethnic cleansing for the regime of Slobodan Milosevic. See Hoare, *The History of Bosnia*, p.339.
granted many of its demands and embedded them into the new constitution. The new, and what was to be the last Yugoslavia’s constitution, drafted as always by Kardelj, proclaimed a truly decentralized country, giving each republic the prerogatives of a state. It gave the same rights to the Serbia’s autonomous regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo, regions with large Hungarian and Albanian populations. This decision ignited the flames of discontent within Serbia several years later. But, in the interim, the republics were still ruled by communist elites and, in theory, responsible to the Federal League of Communist. Tito kept the Army and the security apparatus under his personal control.

Peace descended on the country, as everyone understood that things would not change as long as the Old Man - how he liked to be called - was alive. Entering the ninth decade of his long life, Tito became more isolated. Surrounded by his cronies, enjoying an opulent lifestyle, he lost the touch with the real life of the country. Yugoslavia continued to borrow money to fund its social peace. Cheap and abundant loans were widely available and Yugoslavs, oblivious to their problems, continued to enjoy a standard of living disproportionate to the real state of their crumbling economy. From 1974 on, Tito presided over the end of his life project, often sharing the grave concerns for the future of Yugoslavia with his close associates. But he was too old to change his ways, or to abandon his cronies, let alone willing to open debate on his unchallenged position in society.

With the last Yugoslav Constitution, in 1974, Yugoslavia was effectively turned into a loose confederation. With a final shift in power towards the republics, came a final shift in cultural identities. The imagined community of Yugoslavia was gradually stripped of any meaning and abandoned in favor of the divided loyalties between the particular nations. The federal center started ‘withering away’, though not in the way it was meant to. The centrifugal nationalistic forces would lay low for some time, only to reappear in full force a few years after Tito’s death, this time in the form of awakened Serbian nationalism. This will be a subject of our inquiry in the next chapter.

---

68 Many of the economic injustices were corrected. Export companies were allowed to retain 20% of foreign exchange earnings, while tourist enterprises were permitted to keep 45% of earnings instead of previous 12%. Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, p.259.

69 The decade of seventies was the period when the standard of living reached its highest point.

70 See Tepavac, “Tito”, p.73. Also see Beloff, *Tito’s Flawed Legacy*, p.198.
It should be emphasized that again, as in the First Yugoslavia, it was a
dysfunctional political system that was producing the national question and not the other
way around. Although at first rejected, the principle of nation-state would eventually be
embraced by the Communists - quietly, along the lines of decentralization and federalism.
After a few sudden ideological shifts, the Communist leadership, in a desperate search for
political legitimacy, adopted limited market reforms and decentralization as a surrogate
for democratization. Genuine multiculturalism and uncompromised national equality
were maintained through that time and almost certainly remain the most consistent
Yugoslav policy and the legacy of Tito’s regime.

Genuine embracing the values of liberal democracy, political pluralism, rule of
law, and an effort of build up a civil society and institution of citizen would certainly
have had a better chance to strengthen the Yugoslav polity and its imagined community,
without compromising its federal constitution and genuine national equity. Yet, this
would certainly have required the abolition of the political power of the Communist party
and its leader. Instead, Tito pursued an illusory form of decentralization in a desperate
attempt to cling to power. Ironically, by delegating all powers to the republics they not
only denied the center of any control, but more importantly, they forced their citizens to
start seeing themselves only as members of their respective nations. Although the
sovereign rights were given to the republics and not the nations, every republic (except
Bosnia) had a dominant nation that in the climate of political monism soon started seeing
itself as a full nation-state. In absence of any other political option, the citizens were
pushed to register their grievances only through the prism of nation.

Tito, despite the outcry of Serbian and Croatian nationalists cannot be blamed for
favoring or mistreating any nation; he was a rather genuine internationalist, and well
aware of Yugoslavia’s national problem, he did everything to impose a fair national
balance. His country was a “multinational anachronism in an age characterized by the
triumph of the ideology of nation-state.”71 The reign of the “last of the Habsburgs”72
certainly will be remembered as marked by genuine national and religious equality and

---

71 Rusinow, Yugoslavia, p.299.
72 This was a title given to Tito by the British historian A.J.P. Taylor to describe his success in ruling the
most ethnically mixed and complicated of Habsburg successor states. Quoted in Rusinow, Yugoslavia,
p.288.
tolerance. But this was done on the wrong premise of one-party federalism, which paradoxically, after his death, would prove to be an incubator of nationalism.

If any responsibility should be assigned to Tito, it was his resistance to allow profound political change and to introduce democracy. He and the Party also failed to confront the past and open a rational debate about a tragic interethnic carnage of the Second World War, on the territory of Yugoslavia. The absence of political plurality would ensue underdevelopment of civil society, the absence of rule of law and the independent media. Coupled with a long and profound economic crisis, Yugoslavia’s complicated history, Tito’s reckless political successors, and the low level of education of general population in countryside (the main supporter of nationalistic programs), it would prove fatal for the existence of the country: “In its seventy years of existence Yugoslavia tried monarchy and Communism, centralized and decentralized government, “self management”- everything except genuine democracy. And only as a genuine democracy could Yugoslavia have held together or, if proven a failure, dissolved honorably.”

73 Tepavac, “Tito”, p.77.
Chapter 5
The Death of Yugoslavia
1981-1991

The decentralization of the Yugoslav federation, which commenced in the early seventies, unintentionally created eight sovereign states. Republic party oligarchies used newly acquired powers to pursue particular interests draining the federal center of any power. This eventually resulted in the paralysis of the entire system. The breakdown of the political system, the long economic decline, the cultural disintegration of the country, and the collapse of communism on the world stage was the background against which the nationalistic forces in Serbia emerged at the end of the 1980’s. Voicing their dissatisfaction with the existing arrangement of the system, and arguing a need for change, they pursued the realization of their singular goals by openly introducing the vocabulary of ethnic politics in political discourse. Aligning themselves with the pre-existing currents of nationalism, and actively abusing and manipulating the unresolved national question, Serbian political elites destabilized the very compromise on which Yugoslavia had been based. In the process they awakened Serbian nationalism, produced ethnic homogenization in other republics - especially in Croatia - and set the centrifugal forces in motion. Slovenian and Croatian political elites equally manipulated nationalism in pursuit of their particular goals. That struggle of centrifugal forces within the frame of ethnic politics would gradually take a whole country towards the edge of the abyss - ultimately pushing it over. Over the decade of the nineties, Yugoslavia disappeared into the cataclysm of war, resulting in catastrophic consequences for most of its citizens.

Unravelling at the Seams

Soon after Tito’s death in 1980, the first cracks in the edifice started to appear. Ten years after the 1974 Constitution, Yugoslavia was a loose federation of republics that were ruled by their respective oligarchies. In a desperate search for political legitimacy Yugoslavia’s rulers indeed attempted further decentralisation, but with no effort for
further democratization. Tito had removed the liberals and stalled democratic reforms. He gave all the rights of the state to the republics, yet, reconfirmed the one party system, which he filled with people whose highest virtue was their loyalty to him. Irvine argues: “This compromise between the federalist and Bolshevik strategies appears to have offered the worst of both worlds.”

With changes brought by the new constitution and institutionalized over the last few years of Tito’s life, the republics had not only full control over their economy and administration, but also the judiciary system, culture, education and foreign trade. They were also running separate banking systems, post offices and transport authorities. Moreover, they were granted veto-powers in the federal assembly. In 1977 the eight republics and provinces were endowed with a full right to raise their own funds, without any restraints. This was pursued, absurdly, with a federation as an underwriter of debt. This action further motivated republican bureaucrats to neglect any economic logic and start competing with each other in irrational shopping sprees that were financing mostly “political factories” on their own turf, while buying the loyalty of their political constituency. In the economy, far remote from the real market mechanisms, the repercussions were that every economic decision was a political one. It is not hard to see that this would inevitably lead towards eight separate economies and administrative systems, mutually incompatible and insulated.

At the beginning of the eighties, to the dismay of the foreign creditors, it was discovered that the Yugoslavian ‘economic miracle’, which had created intense interest and recognition in the West during the seventies, was only a façade, and that Yugoslavia was unable to meet its financial obligations. The country still enjoyed high international importance, and the American administration had arranged immediate financial help.

---


2 Despite our tendency to see bureaucracy as a rational endeavor, Hall argues that bureaucracy is in fact an irrational force that has tremendous potential to be counterproductive in every society and culture. Its drive towards inefficiency is inherent, and stems from our human frailty and irrationality, as well as from bureaucratic need for self-preservation and the protection of its own privileges: “By their very nature, bureaucracies have no conscience, no memory and no mind. They are self-serving, amoral and live forever.” Hall, *Beyond Culture*, p.218. Irvine argues along the same lines illustrating it with the example of Yugoslav politicians who behaved in fundamentally different ways when put to work for a federation or a republic. According to the conditions that had prevailed, they would change their loyalty from the region to the center - or the other way around after decentralization prevailed. The very same leaders would employ diverse state building strategies with the same goal in both cases, maximizing their authority and power. Irvine, *The Croat Question*, p.218.
With a set of rearranged loans, the IMF simultaneously prescribed shock therapy, which was supposed to get the economy back on track and curb the rampant inflation. Pressed by foreign creditors, the governments of Milka Planinc and Branko Mikulic tried imposing prescribed bitter medicine. This failed to produce anything except the resentment of the population, and long line-ups for anything that had to be paid with the hard currency on the world market. The living standards of shaken Yugoslavs that peaked during the decade of the seventies were now plummeting; many replaced shopping and vacationing abroad with long line-ups for gasoline and coffee.

The nationalistic tensions in Kosovo exploded in 1981, only a year after Tito’s death. It brought to the surface the severity of the economic crises as well as the failure of the federal policy to bridge the disparities between developed and underdeveloped regions. This explosion shook the very foundation of the political system. It exposed an overall crisis in the legitimacy of Communist rule, and the crumbling public confidence in its sclerotic elite, throughout the entire country. With Tito gone, no one kept the slightest belief that communist apparatchiks were capable of leading the country. Institutions kept functioning mostly by inertia, while the main political and economic ethos of the whole system was now openly challenged. There was a general consensus that the system was broken and in desperate need for repair.

Public debate that was soon open (or better, that could not be prevented), exposed the old rifts in Yugoslavian society between conservatives who wanted recentralization and those who wanted to further decentralize to turn Yugoslavia into de jure confederation. The only thing they could agree on was to leave their monopoly on power intact. The economy was not only stagnating but in deep trouble by the mid-eighties. At this time public discussions were already signalling that an embrace of a full market economy with a full private enterprise was inevitable. While Slovenia and a limited number of liberals from all other republics argued for full market reforms, Serbia now led by Slobodan Milosevic and supported by the conservatives from other republics and the

---


Army, wanted some sort of state controlled capitalism. The “polycentric etatisme”, a phenomenon where state control operated from the eight provincial capitals instead of federal centre, was even officially identified as the main source of paralysis of the system.\(^5\)

By the mid eighties, on the wings of economic disintegration, the centrifugal forces were back, with nationalists back into public discourse in every republic. The new 1974 constitution turned republics effectively into nation states. In the case of Yugoslavia that presented potential trouble as every republic, except Bosnia, had a dominant nation, yet none of them, except Slovenia were ethnically homogenous.\(^6\) This meant that they were directly put on a path of mutual confrontation - and each one with its own minority groups. As we discerned in previous chapters, the historic state right and ethnic right, in a multicultural mosaic like Yugoslavia were irreconcilable. The nation state can only exist with relative ethnic homogeneity - and in the case of Yugoslavia, that meant that borders would have to be changed by force.

Denitch asserts that by eliminating every other alternative from the political discourse except the national one, local communist leagues, which now catered to their constitutive nations only, essentially became national parties long before political pluralism was introduced.\(^7\) Soon they would assert exclusive representation of national interests - against the competing national demands and against the federal center - as a tool of extending and securing their hold on power. The game of centrifugal nationalism was indeed encouraged by all national elites from the mid 1980’s on, as a successful tool in averting the population’s frustration over the falling standard of living and economic troubles. Wrangling between the communist elites of Serbia and Slovenia had all the characteristics of national confrontation, and were putting Serbs and Croats on a collision course once again. At the same time any serious debate and dialogue about the past was prevented, dangerously leaving that field open for a wave of pseudo-historians and false prophets that would appear just a short time afterwards.

\(^5\) Capital investment between republics in 1983 was only 0.18 %. Beloff, *Tito’s Flawed Legacy*, p.197.
\(^6\) Serbs constituted 12% of population in Croatia, in Serbia 20% of population were non-ethnic Serbs. Macedonia and Montenegro had large chunks of an Albanian population. Bosnia consisted of three nations. Only Slovenia was ethnically homogenous but even there was a large influx of economic immigrants from other parts of the country. Predrag Matvejevic, *Jugoslavenstvo danas*, p.139.
\(^7\) Bogdan Dentich, *Ethnic Nationalism, The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia*, p.60.
The debate within the federal party was now revolving around the general political crisis, necessary changes to an outdated political system, but also around dissatisfaction voiced by Serbia, caused by violence in Kosovo where both communities were posting long lists of grievances, which had suffered from neglect for a long time. Serbia complained that it was rendered powerless and federalized on its own territory. This, as they promulgated, was a result of the 1974 constitution. The Albanian minority demanded their province to be elevated to the full status of republic or allowed outright separation. With the largest republic voicing its dissatisfaction with its status, and a full-fledged crisis on its terrain, other republics were pressured to look into the question of recentralisation and reform of the system.

The Albanian question

The history of Serbian and Albanian conflict over the territory of Kosovo goes back to the medieval Serbian state, where Serbs and Turks fought a legendary Battle on the Field of Blackbirds. Since then this territory, a cradle of the Serbian medieval state, covered by many invaluable Orthodox churches and monasteries, yet populated dominantly by Albanians, remained a cornerstone of Serbian national mythology and the object of a violent contest between the two communities. For years Kosovo remained the

---

8 See chapter 2, pages 23-4.
9 The battle itself is part of the Albanian as well as Serbian folk poetry, giving ground to many Albanian historians who argue that Albanians fought the battle along with Serbs, against the invading Ottomans. It is also obvious that the two communities had much more peaceful and cooperative relations in Dushan’s medieval Serbia where Albanians were included into his state and administration. With the Turkish conquest Albanians massively converted to Islam and, according to some Serbian historians, became a part of the Ottoman administration responsible for the suffering of Serbs and their migrations northbound, towards Habsburg lands, after the unsuccessful uprising against the Turks in 1690 and 1734. Yet, the fact that some Albanian clans and families were acting as protectors and traditional guardians of Orthodox monasteries, talks again about the more tolerant past between the two communities than what was to follow with the beginning of the modern age. The bitterness between the two communities was sowed with the decision of Berlin Congress, after the Russo-Turkish War, which gave Serbia independence but assigned Kosovo to Turkey. The Serbs in Kosovo paid the high price in blood for Bismark’s decision, which further complicated the already strained Serbian-Albanian relations. Kosovo was repatriated by Serbia only in 1913 after the bloody affair of the Balkan Wars and the brutal campaign of Serbian forces against the Albanian civil population, which was widely condemned in the foreign press thanks to the reports of a young Russian newspaper reporter, Leon Trotsky. A leading Serbian Socialist, Dimitrije Tucovic, also denounced the Serbian atrocities and argued full accommodation of the Albanian minority in the new state after WW I. His arguments were ignored by Serbian conservative political elites who rather employed
center of the Serbian national obsession. Ironically on this terrain, the Serbian population had steadily decreased while the Albanian population had increased. During WW II the already dominant Albanian population was the only Yugoslav nation that was not supporting Tito’s partisan struggle but rather siding with their ethnic kin in Albania, in their support of the Axis effort. After the war, in order to pacify and appease them, Tito gave the reintegrated territory of Kosovo a status of an autonomous region that would soon be elevated to the full status of a province. He also turned a blind eye on the large post-war influx of Albanians who had moved into the province from desperately poor and isolated Albania. The demographic preponderance of Albanians in Kosovo raised many eyebrows in Serbia and, as always in an effort to strike the balance, Tito allowed the province to remain under the firm rule of Belgrade, without any real autonomy until the fall of Rankovic.10

Rankovic was removed partly because Tito realized that further repression of Kosovo could result in the increased alienation of the local population and foster separatism. Already in 1968 there were loud demands that Kosovo be given the full status of a republic, backed by the argument that Albanians were the fifth largest nation in Yugoslavia, more numerous than Macedonians or Montenegrins. This demand was refused because the federal government did not want to get involved in, what was perceived as a further partition of Serbia. Also this change would have had a further impact on the inter-republican balance, as large Albanian minorities were also present in Montenegro and Macedonia. The same year, after students’ demonstrations colored with overly nationalistic overtones, the Serbs and Montenegrins, at first mostly skilled repression in dealing with the Albanian minority. The Albanians responded with an open revolt and armed insurgency that lasted full five years, to be put down in blood only in 1924.In 1941, Italy added territories of Kosovo and western Macedonia to Albania proper that was conquered already in 1939.It allowed Kosovo a practical administrative integration with Albania. When German forces took control of the region they simply ignored the mistreatment of Serbs and Montenegrins from local Albanians, who saw the German-Italian occupation rather as an act of liberation. See Udovicki “The Bonds and the Fault Lines” pp.31-3.Also, Dimitrije Tucovic, Srbija i Albanija, jedan prilog kritici zavojevacke politike srpske burzoazije, www.pescanik.net, retrieved April 28, 2010.

10 In 1956 Serbs and Montenegrins were 27.4% of population but 86.6% of security forces, Albanians consisted 64.9% of population, accounting for only 13.3 % of security police and 31.3% of regular police. Yet while Rankovic’s police ruled with an iron fist, the Albanian population was growing significantly faster than any other in the country. By the end of 1980 Albanians were making 92% of employees in the social sector, although only 77% of population. Now Serbs were underrepresented. Although 23% of population they represented only 5% of employees in social sector. Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, pp.294-299.
professionals, started the modern exodus from Kosovo that was only to accelerate through the 1970’s and 1980’s. In 1974 Kosovo was granted full equality with the other Serbian province, yet now, a newly assertive majority demanded the full status of a republic.

Tito correctly saw the development of underdeveloped regions of the country as a way of guaranteeing not only national equality but also social peace. Yet in practice the ‘Fond for Aid to Underdeveloped Regions’ yielded little result and instead produced a lot of frustration on both the receiving and giving ends. Despite the fact that the investment into the underdeveloped parts of the country - Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Kosovo - was generous, they were still unable to catch up with the more developed parts of the federation - Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and Vojvodina. Kosovo especially remained an economic black hole, siphoning a large amount of funds without any noticeable results. Unemployment remained stubbornly high, coupled with high rates of illiteracy and a huge demographic shift where Albanians were increasing their birth rate at a pace three times faster than the national average. The issue of Kosovo was developing into a perfect storm, containing all the elements of Yugoslavia’s economic and political crisis.11

Drakulic is hard on every Yugoslav for failing the test of integration of this large minority that took the role of “Other within” for the rest of the country. She argues:

“There was no need to construct their “Otherness”- as for example, with Jews in prewar Germany or recently with Serbs in Croatia. The Albanians were never integrated into the country’s social political and cultural life. They existed separately from us, barely visible people on the margins of our society, with their strange language that nobody understood, their tribal organisation, blood feuds, different habits and dress. They were always underdogs. What was their place in

11 From 1976 to 1990 Kosovo received 48% of total funds distributed by the federation. The reasons for this were the massive misspending of political elites. The funds, instead of being invested rationally in the economy and the job creation, mostly went towards expensive public buildings or “political factories”, community centers, and luxury residential areas for party leaders. At the same time Kosovo’s population doubled in just three years (from 1981 to 1984). Illiteracy rates remained highest in Kosovo, marking 17.6%. This applied to mostly the older population, as within young generations illiteracy was wiped out. Yugoslavia’s economy never closed the gap between the developed and undeveloped parts of the country, despite the growth of both, in fact the gap between them was widening by the mid eighties. See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.275.
Yugoslav literature, in movies, and popular culture? What famous Yugoslavs were Albanians? Because of this estrangement, not many voices were raised in protest during the past ten years, when Albanians in Kosovo lived practically under apartheid...It was clear that they belonged to a different category from Serbs, Croats, Macedonians or Slovenes. Serbs could even fight a war against Croats, but they never perceived each other in the same way they both perceived Albanians. The prejudice against Albanians can be compared to that against Jews or blacks or Gypsies in other cultures.”

It was questionable how much allegiance Albanians could have for the country that endowed them with all the rights, yet often in practice, collectively treated them as second-class citizens. Yet, the mixture of repression, exclusion, geographical proximity of Albania, and Yugoslavia’s lax policy of education left entirely in the realm of provinces and republics, produced catastrophic results. The books for elementary and high schools, as well as universities, were imported from Albania until the early 1980’s. Only then did the republican and federal bureaucrats realize that those books had been colored with separatist overtones and promoted loyalty to their ethnic kin rather than to the country of their residence.

The distrust between the two communities was now growing by leaps and bounds. The student demonstrations of 1981 loudly demanded a republic, and further elevated the rhetoric of Albanian separatism threatening full secession. The demonstrations escalated into full riots that had to be put down by the deployment of special police and army forces. The revolt of the Albanian majority triggered the next northbound wave of migrations by the Serb minority. This not only increased the strain between the two local communities further, but also contributed to raising frustration within the rest of Yugoslavia. Tanks on the streets of the provincial capital and the officially proclaimed state of emergency were the final proof for all other republics that

13 Blagojevic argues that results of research of different forms of ghettoization demonstrate that it always results in the creation of a parallel system of institutions: “Exclusion by the Other, is often followed by self-exclusion in the interest of self-protection.” Marina Blagojevic, “The Migration of Serbs from Kosovo during the 1970s and 1980s”, in Nebojsa Popov’s The Road to War in Serbia, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2000, p.235.
all efforts to revive Kosovo’s economy had failed. The confusion and insecurity about the future, together with the increased harassment of the Serbian minority, ultimately set the stage for the rise of the main architect of the Yugoslav catastrophe Slobodan Milosevic, who would soon set all of Serbia and subsequently Yugoslavia ablaze with nationalism: “Kosovo was the catalyst of the Yugoslav crisis.”

The Culture of Apocalypse

With further decentralization each of the particular parts was provided with its own TV, radio and press. This would prove crucial a few years later, as they became the main carriers of the nationalistic message. The genuine desire to guarantee ethnic and national equality ironically was draining the center of any authority and slowly led to the abandonment of the project of a supranational culture that was hoped to eventually emerge if genuine national equality were provided. Yugoslavia was slowly turning into a series of cultures living beside each other as the Yugoslav plural identity was slowly but steadily delegitimized and left in favor of a particularistic identity.

In the realm of education, the curriculum reflected the trend of further decentralization and further erosion of the center. After 1974 the schools were left to do “whatever they wanted provided they offered the required minimum number of hours in each subject.” By the mid 1980’s it was clear that the republican curriculum had veered so much that it started posing problems not only for federal politicians, but also for students who might move from one province to the next. After endless negotiations it was agreed to reform the curriculum so that at least 50 percent of the literary texts to be taught in elementary schools were made of “core curriculum” proposed by the federation, leaving the other 50 percent at the discretion of each republic’s educational authority. Even this hard-negotiated minimum was soon derailed by the Slovenian Writers

---

14 Maliqui, as quoted in Blagojevic. She also argues that Kosovo rather introduced a new concept of discrimination along the ethnic lines in Yugoslav political discourse and acted as an agent of normalization of ethnic violence, migration and conquest of the land by the other. What had been an extreme rarity in Yugoslav society, in the wake of the crisis in Kosovo, in matter of a few short years become normality. See Blagojevic “The Migration of Serbs from Kosovo during the 1970s and 1980s”, p.233.
15 Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, p.185.
16 Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, p.186.
Association as unacceptable encroachment on Slovenian sovereignty and simply labeled as “hegemonic Serbian centralism”. Already, in 1983, cultural authority has ceased to exist.17

The eighties in Yugoslavia were glowing with a particular radiance of what Ramet calls the “apocalypse culture”, characteristic for the developed societies in decay.18 Although the overall tones of the discourse were pessimistic, and filled with fear, resignation and despair, this chaotic period did see some democratization and overall liberalisation of the whole society. The media in particular seized the new freedoms and started challenging the communist regime by tackling yesterday’s taboos. The weak democratic opposition started questioning the main premises of the system, the transparency and legitimacy of the communist party rule, advocating political pluralism, and demanding an open discussion about the past.

Yet, despite the fact that people were deriving their information from the republican media, the overall culture still remained mainstream European in orientation at least for the first part of the 1980’s. A truly international rock scene emerged simultaneously in Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo, followed by young generations tackling many social issues in provocative but positive ways. The number of theatre, music and film festivals still kept Yugoslavs in touch, as well as did various TV programs.19 A significant amount of press, especially youth magazines, were opening polemics on important social and political themes, still reaching their limited audiences across republican borders.

The census of 1981 revealed that some 5 percent of the population declared themselves as Yugoslavs by nationality, a sudden jump from only 1 percent in 1971. These results could be interpreted in different ways. As Wachtel suggests it could be argued that it confirmed that the policy of ‘non-aggressive’ Yugoslavism was giving

---

17 Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, pp.188-9.
18 Other good examples of countries with the ‘apocalypse culture’ would be late Austria-Hungary and Weimar Germany, Pedro Ramet, Yugoslavia in the 1980s, Westview Special Studies, 1985, p.3.
19 Information was still crossing republican borders, as TV centers integrated programs produced in other republics in their programming scheme on a rotating bases. This lasted until the end of the decade, when the TV centers in four republics became mouthpieces of Milosevic government and direct instruments of propaganda. Even then, until the beginning of the nineties, the exchange of TV programs continued to work for sport, culture and everything else except for news and political programs. See Mark Thompson, Forging War, The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Article 19, London, 1994, p.21.
results with a delay, which makes us speculate that Yugoslavia as a project, despite not being actively pursued, could have materialized if it had had enough time. On the other hand these peculiar numbers can be read, as Yugoslavian sociologist Dusan Bilandzic proposes, as a deep general anxiety about the future. In a situation in which one’s known world was collapsing, without the imagination to conceive an alternative future, people clung for their common disappearing identity however weak it was.

This is far from the claim that Yugoslavs were culturally integrated. Still, the large number of peoples, especially a new generation, felt a kind of emotional attachment towards Yugoslavia as a unique cultural space. It has to be underlined that despite of all the problems plaguing Yugoslavia’s existence, and all the bickering of national elites, ethnic tolerance and peaceful coexistence after World War II achieved many results on the level of every day life. Fifty years of common life had reflected itself in a large number of mixed marriages, friendships, family ties, common values and popular culture that transcended national borders. Years of living in a safe and open environment that enabled millions of Yugoslavs to travel, mix and interact were yielding results.

Despite what was listened to at home, where war memories and nationalistic grievances might have been kept alive, the school curriculum still preached tolerance along the lines of the official ideology of brotherhood and unity. The memories from the Second World War, especially for younger generations, had lost their edge, as the values of common life prevailed. If resentment towards the ‘Other’ was kept alive in the families or villages or other places where traditional patriarchal values prevailed, it was certainly blunted by the secular culture of open cities, hot spots of cultural integration. The republic’s borders were still areas of cultural exchange and minorities were protected and largely culturally assimilated within their respective communities.  

20 Ramet, *Yugoslavia in the 1980s*, p. 11.
21 For any foreigner a Serb and a Croat in any of the large Croatian or Serbian cities would be literally indistinguishable. This assimilation was one of the threats later recognized and attacked by their respective national elites. The same applied to Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs in Bosnian cities, who culturally resembled each other more than their respective ethnic kin in Croatia and Serbia. Despite the large exodus of Serbs and Croats in the mid seventies from Sarajevo, who left looking for better jobs and more prospects, the city had become most Yugoslav city, with one fifth of the population declaring themselves as Yugoslavs and home to almost 40% mixed marriages. Over the decade of the eighties it gave a rise to one of the most secular cultures becoming a real cultural center of Yugoslavia. See Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.337. Stevanovic brings to our attention that on the territory of Yugoslavia 1 300 000 people used to live in mixed marriages, and according to some calculations their kin would include up to ten million
Slovenian writer Ales Debeljak argues:

“For me, popular slogans about ‘the celebration of diversity’ were never mere philosophical speculation. As far back as I can recall, these differences were the crux of my experience of life at a crossroads of various cultures…I considered the diversity of Yugoslav reality to be a fact of nature. Pathetically but not inaccurately put, Yugoslavia was like a many-colored carpet that allowed me to maintain contact with lands that were dramatically different from the baroque Central European town where I grew up yet still part of the same country…I had three powerful forces to thank for the shape of my cultural identity: my native Slovenian tradition, the tradition of worldwide mass culture, and finally the unique experience of Yugoslavia’s cultural weaving, which had made my pilgrimage to a café in Skopje as great an existential necessity as my visit to the Chelsea Hotel.”

In the mid eighties Yugoslavia was at an intersection. On one side the fragile democratic forces, present in every republic, that wanted to transform the whole country in accordance to the model of Western democracy and to integrate it within a wider European community, respectful of the multicultural character of society and all the achievements of fifty years of common life. On the other side there were conservative forces, vestiges of the privileged strata of society (the Communist party and the Army), afraid of losing their advantages. In their attempt to cling to power they were ready to turn coat and present themselves as new advocates of the old - unresolved - ethnic question: “In nationalism conservative forces found an instrument against fundamental social, political and economic change that threatened their social positions and privileges.”

Our cultural identities reflect political changes with a rather significant delay. They are socially constructed and it takes a prolonged and orchestrated effort from the


23 Jasminka Udovicki& Ivan Todorov, “The Interlude”, in Udovicki & Ridgeway, Burn This House, p.83.
center of the political power to bring them in sync with the elite’s political interests. Yugoslavia might have been a creature of the intellectual elites of the nineteenth century with the masses never consulted about its creation. Yet it could be argued that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was equally a product of the political elites and that the common people this time were equally opposed to the actions of their elites.\textsuperscript{24} This time the sense of the ‘Other’ had to be manufactured, or at least resurrected, cultural exchange had to be stopped, the “narcissism of minor differences” awakened and multiple identities of Yugoslavs devoid of any meaning and reduced to a single, national one. Enter again the nationalistic intellectual elites.

\textbf{The Cultural Wars}

It could be argued that the very same role that the cultural elites played in the emergence of early nationalism and the formation of a national consciousness at the end of the nineteenth century was replayed to the very detail, almost a hundred years later. Instead of multicultural Empires (Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian), this time the common Yugoslav state was perceived as the foreign element that the elites would attack. In order to secure political loyalty to the concept of nation-state, they provided their constituency with national rhetoric, furnished their narratives with historic poetry, revived myths of the golden ages, delineated their ‘historic lands’ and, moreover, rewrote history according to the long list of national grievances. At the same time, forging a culture that does not distinguish between myth and history, they proved how dangerous and powerful the tool of nationalism could be.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Even the results of the first Slovenian elections, the republic that was traditionally most liberal and always nurtured the least attachment to Yugoslavia, proved that a whole 60 % of population still favored some sort of Yugoslavia (although not more than 20 % were willing to give up any of the sovereign rights in favor of a federation). This clearly showed that the confederal rather than secessionist option still prevailed, even six months before the war, despite heavy barrage of nationalistic fire from Serbia, and despite all problems that plagued Yugoslavia’s existence. See Lampe, \textit{Yugoslavia as History}, p.359.

\textsuperscript{25} This is not to claim that all nationalism is necessarily bad, but rather that it has to be linked to the institutional context in which it appears. Nationalism was born out of a theory of progress, and when it just appeared was a positive force. It not only facilitated the existence of large nation states, but also put these entities on the path of economic and social progress. Susan Woodward proposes that nationalism could be rather seen as an “empty vessel” that could be filled with meaning depending on the situation. She argues
Nationalism arrives on the wings of complaints of subjugation; it thrives on the perceived wrongs, on “injured pride”, and a “just struggle” for fair treatment. Yet once released out of the bottle, and put into motion in the reality of the disintegrating Yugoslavian state, it could hardly be stopped until it played itself out to the very end. As A. J. P. Taylor argued, talking about Austro-Hungary, another multi-cultural state that had disappeared in a game of ethnic politics: “The conflict between a super-national dynastic state and the national principle had to be fought to the finish; and so, too, had the conflict between master and subject nations. Inevitably, any concession came too late and was too little, and inevitably every concession provoked more violent discontent. The national principle, once launched, had to work itself out to a conclusion.”

Over the decade of 1980’s, prior to the rise of Slobodan Milosevic, which would put Serbian nationalism into high gear, in the already relaxed public atmosphere a whole series of articles, novels and theatre performances started challenging the premises of Yugoslavia’s political and social system from the point of Serbian national resentment. As in the case of the Croatian Spring, a general movement that predates the political dismantling of Yugoslavia started in the cultural sphere, only to signal and reflect the deeper political problems of the system.

At first the cult of Tito and the Party was attacked and made a subject of critical inquiry. This process of so-called “de-Titoization” was mostly carried out in Serbia, and was met with concern in other republics. The Serb intellectual elite, including some of the most prominent historians attacked Tito from an entirely ahistorical point, charging him for conspiracies against Serb interests. A number of books, theatre performances and

---


27 The resentment was running deep into the past, and the list of grievances was long. Most of them were mentioned on the pages of this study in previous chapters, yet they were given a new spin: ‘Despite of the sacrifices that Serbs gave for the formations of both Yugoslavias they were the victims of that unification,
above all historic novels followed, starting to open the past by lamenting the fate of Serbs and their role in Yugoslavia. Instead of encouraging open dialogue about the past, based on facts, this revision of the past was done from a platform of self-pity. It paved the way for the arrival of Slobodan Milosevic, with whom historical revisionism would become the norm.

Novelists soon joined historians. Several highly influential, immensely popular, and widely discussed novels revolved around the same narrative: Yugoslavia was a mistake for which Serbs sacrificed their own state. They were true victims of the unification as they suffered tremendously for the freedom of the other South Slavs in both wars, only to be called unitarists and hegemonist, over and over again. These books contributed to the nationalistic hysteria that had already swept over other media and public discourse. Nationalism started prevailing in the rhetoric of the resurgent Orthodox Church, a new darling of the communist regime in Serbia.

In the light of the resurrected myth of the Battle of Kosovo, the Serbs were now described by their own intellectual elite as a “celestial nation”, chosen by god, unique in their struggle for freedom and selfless suffering for the good of others. When an accent

as both Yugoslavias were formed at their expense. The Serbs were the only one-beside Montenegrins-who had an independent state prior to formation of Yugoslavia, yet while others prospered, with the constitution of 1974 Serbia was reduced to its borders from 1912. Tito was a “Serbophobe” who imposed two provinces on Serbia’s territory, yet he rejected the same arrangement for the solution of Serbian question in Croatia. Equally Bosnia and Montenegro were resurrected as separate federal units, although they had sizable Serb minorities who were not enjoying any special constitutional rights. Moreover, the Macedonian nation, although created from scratch, was granted a separate federal unit.’ All of this was rather seen as a deliberate act of weakening Serbia and cultural division of Serbian nation. Arguments further charged that ‘Mihajlovic and his initial antifascist struggle were deliberately equated after the war with Pavelic Ustasha forces, only because they were the main competitors of Communists for power. Croats emerged as the victors at the end of the war despite a terrible crime perpetrated by NDH. Tito deliberately covered the truth about the genocide of the Serbs and he never visited Jasenovac. He ruthlessly silenced the Serbian democratic opposition after the war. Despite all sacrifices and the fact that Yugoslavia was created at the expense of Serbs, the Serbian people had to be silent about it, as any argument in that direction would be labeled as unitarism, centralism or a Great Serbian chauvinism’… For a good example of a discussion that employs all of the above-mentioned one-sided arguments that launched whole culture of victimization in Serbia see Branko Petranovic, *The Yugoslav Experience of Serbian National Integration*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 2002. Petranovic was considered as one of the leading Yugoslav historians until the early eighties when he opened the trend of historical revision, starting with his own work. He was followed with several prominent historians including Veselin Djuretic and leading Bosnian Serb historian Milorad Ekmecic. Their revisionism opened the doors for rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement, opening the question of Croatian war guilt, the Albanian question and so on. Ultimately, it proved that the Communist decision to declare crimes committed by Chetniks and Ustashas in the WWII a taboo, all in the name of the healing the wounds, proved to be a serious mistake, which now played in the hands of the influential nationalists. See Sabrina P. Ramet, “The Denial Syndrome and Its Consequences: Serbian Political Culture since 2000” www.webcache.googleusercontent.com, retrieved on February 25, 2010.
had to be put on the ‘Others’ and their guilt for Serb suffering, slaughter, and their ultimate betrayal, the new attribute was forged: “remnants of the slaughtered nation”. All of this offered a vision of Serbs “as the sacrificial victims of Yugoslavism which ultimately provided the moral and cultural justification for the policies that were followed by Slobodan Milosevic a few years later.”

It might be argued that Yugoslav cultural elites rather led than followed political developments, yet the reasons for this were much deeper. For all of forty years Yugoslavia’s delicate ethnic balance was resting on the compromise maintained by Tito, where Serbian domination over the common state and Croatian separation were equally suppressed. During this time the system itself was not democratized and it lacked an institutional frame that would enable Yugoslavia to survive its ultimate arbiter. The common state that was constantly decentralized in order to accommodate all constituents was finally, with the Constitution of 1974, thrown out of equilibrium with the balance tipping decisively in favor of particular parts. The Serb elites now felt threatened, as they perceived others as gaining strength at their expense.

---

28 Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, p.205. During that decade several highly influential and popular historical novels appeared that conveyed the same message. The most famous was “The Time of Death” by father of modern Serbian nationalism Dobrica Cosic. He was one of most popular and influential communist regime writers whose partisan novels were part of a mandatory read in all schools in Yugoslavia. After 1968, when he was kicked out of the Communist party because of its criticism over its policy on Kosovo, he became one of the most influential internal dissidents of the system, speaking more and more from the position of Serbian nationalism. “The Time of Death” was set in the historical framework of WWI and describes the Calvary of the Serbian Army in that war. Yet, within the context of the story it delivers all of the above-mentioned arguments of Serbian self-victimization. It undermines the idea of Yugoslavia, arguing the impossibility of coexistence with the other South Slavs and Albanians; it presents Serbs in an overly positive light while demonizing all others and blaming them for Serb historical misfortunes. Several other historical novels followed during the decade of the eighties conveying the very same ideas. Some of them were better literature than others, as internationally acclaimed “The Dictionary of the Khazars” by Milorad Pavic; some were more populist as Danko Popovic’s “Book About Milutin”. Yet, they all managed to normalize nationalism as a discourse and prove it historically justified. Directly or indirectly seeking correction of historical injustice they all gave support to Milosevic’s policies justifying his future wars and aggression against the others. For discussion on Serbian literature in that period see Wachtel, *Breaking a Nation, Making a Nation*, pp. 198-224. Also Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp. 197-201.

29 Cirkovic argues that federalization itself did not threaten the federation. The threat arose when republican oligarchies adopted exclusive unilateral orientation and rejected the balance between the center and its parts, draining all power from the federation. Cirkovic, *The Serbs*, p.291.

30 The convoluted frame of the new Constitution had given the right to secession to Yugoslav nations instead of republics as stipulated by earlier constitutions. This gave a basis to Serbian intellectual elites to question the place of Serbs in Yugoslavia and argue that further decentralization affects the interests of all Serbs to live in one state. This was defined now as the most important Serbian national interest, to be achieved at any price. The only way to rectify the existing situation was to ensure the return to a strong central state or, if that is impossible, to destroy Yugoslavia by the creation of a Serbian national state. See Vesna Pesic, “The War for Ethnic States” in Popov’s *The Road to War in Serbia*, p.30. Ramet argues that
In the mid eighties the intellectual elites of Slovenia and Serbia started voicing their dissatisfaction with the status of their respective nations within Yugoslavia. Although their positions were diametrically opposed, both of these arguments appealed to their lowest common denominator, the denunciation of the common state. While Slovenes argued that they were oppressed by the artificial Yugoslav nationalism and unitarism, Serbs argued that they were threatened by the separatism of others and the model of confederation that was imposed on them.

These arguments were soon published in two documents. They were both filled with overt nationalism, yet still came disguised as demands for democracy and the change of the political system. The alternative they offered was a democracy on the level of *ethnos*; intellectuals were speaking the language of the never solved national question: “Yugoslavia was either to be founded on completely new *national* principles, or should not exist at all.” Still, it would take the outreach of the state, right from the center of political power down the avenues of administration, cultural and social life, church and media to awaken the masses, secure their consent and move them in the way their nationalistic leaders wanted.

since this right to secede was left without prescribed procedures and curbed with the article that frontiers of Yugoslavia can be changed only with the consent of all Repubs and Provinces indicates that it was not intended that anyone would actually use that right. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p.327.

31 *The Memorandum* of Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences was published in September 1986 and *Contributions for the Slovenian National Programme* in January 1987. The Memorandum had made a much larger impression on public memory because of its virulent nationalistic language, and because it was soon fully endorsed by Serbian political elites and promoted in the legitimate national program. Still, both documents bear striking similarities in timing of appearance, style they are written in, and the topics they cover. Both documents list a catalogue of diverse national grievances, yet they both equally deny any legitimacy to the common state. Memorandum attacked Yugoslavia from the point of the unsolved Serbian Question - Serbs are the only nation that is divided by republican borders, culturally and nationally disintegrated and the reestablishment of their unity is their historical and democratic right. Ethnically homogenous Slovenes, on the other hand saw their language and culture endangered by synthetic Yugoslavism. Yet, there is also a striking difference between the Slovenian and Serbian document. While Serb academics were blaming everyone around them for their historic misfortune and frustrations, adopting the ahistoric language of anti-Serb conspiracy within and outside Yugoslavia, the Slovenes were identifying Yugoslavia’s political system as a source of threat to their nation. See Olivera Milosavljevic, “Yugoslavia as a Mistake”, in Popov’s *The Road to War in Serbia*, pp.51-80.

32 Milosavljevic “Yugoslavia as a Mistake”, p.53.
The Rise of Slobodan Milosevic

The appearance of Memorandum, written as the official document of the members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, had created a huge political scandal. The academics questioned Serbia’s place within the federation from a hard-line Serb nationalist viewpoint. They called for a revision to the Constitution of 1974 with which Serbia virtually lost all control over its two provinces. They were claiming that, despite its disproportional sacrifices in forming two Yugoslavias, Serbia was now reduced to its 1912 borders. They called for a definitive solution of the Serbian question; the Serbs should formulate their national goals, achieve unity and reassert their place within Yugoslavia. However, what was more troubling than these arguments was the brazen tone and introduction of a virulent chauvinistic vocabulary into the public discourse. It caused shock and countrywide condemnation. It raised the Serbian national question, but in a way that alienated everybody else. It was widely criticized by many, even by Slobodan Milosevic, who just few months earlier had secured his place as the president of the Serbian League of Communists.

Milosevic would probably have had a much harder time in solidifying his grip on power if Serbia was not already in deep crisis over Kosovo where long-standing grievances between both populations were neglected for years and where local Serbs were harassed at time by the Albanian majority. As a cornerstone of the Serbian national mythology Kosovo was a particularly powerful springboard that would allow Milosevic to harness the discontent of the wider Serbian population, and propel him into political orbit. Leading the conservative wing of the Serbian League of Communists he

33 Serbian dissident writer Vidosav Stevanovic describes Memorandum as a “mixture of the nineteenth century ideals of state formation, historical phantasy, distorted facts, historical anachronism and widely ambitious nationalist aspiration.” Stevanovic, Milosevic, The People’s Tyrant, p.28.
34 Milosevic spoke: “The appearance of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences represents nothing else but the darkest nationalism. It means the liquidation of the current socialist system of our country that is the disintegration after which there is no survival for any nation or nationality… Tito’s policy of brotherhood and unity …is the only basis on which Yugoslavia’s survival can be secured.” See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.321.
35 Milosevic stumbled on the issue of Kosovo on his first official visit to the province where he recognized the explosive power of this burning problem as a chance for his political rise. A simple sentence, forged in the meeting with complaining Kosovo Serbs out of his obvious fear and uneasiness in dealing with the mob was captured on TV camera: “No one should beat you any more”. With this he seized the moment and recognized the power of mob. By choosing the path of direct confrontation with Albanians, he harnessed
successfully deposed the liberal forces in the Party through an internal putsch, portraying himself as the long awaited figure of a politician who was ready to deal with the messy issue of Kosovo and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, while promising wide economic and political reforms.\textsuperscript{36}

Milosevic at first disguised himself as a defender of Tito’s legacy and adherent to the old communist dictionary of defending socialism, a strong Yugoslavia and its federal institutions, especially the \textit{Yugoslav People’s Army}. The Army, as probably the most conservative institution in Yugoslavia, soon proved to be only interested in preserving its own status and privileges. In a country with a divided sovereignty where the centre had held no more power, the Army remained the only viable national institution and its survival was now linked to the survival of the regime itself.\textsuperscript{37} With Tito’s death, a bleak financial future and the winds of change blowing from other republics Milosevic emerged as someone who could offer the Army’s elite a \textit{status quo}.\textsuperscript{38} In reverse they were the only

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{36} Milosevic was a typical bland communist apparatchik who according to the communist principle of cadre rotation exchanged several executive positions in various banks and government owned corporations. Without any particular talents, except for an instinct for political survival, he owed his rise in the Party hierarchy to his long time friend and political mentor Ivan Stambolic, who installed him as a head of the Serbian League of Communist as he took on the place of the President of the Serbian Republic. Stambolic was moderate liberal who sought ways of reintegrating Kosovo, while preserving its autonomy, through a peaceful means. As soon as Milosevic was firmly in power he demonstrated his talent for ruthless treatment of his political opponents and deposed his mentor in a well-organized putsch in December of 1987. Just few months earlier the same fate met the brave Belgrade party president Dragisa Pavlovic who, recognizing Milosevic destructive energy, tried to confront him publicly by convening the press conference in which he openly accused Milosevic of taking Serbia on the path of disaster. He was deposed on the Eight Plenum of Serbia’s party in September of 1987, which marks the beginning of Milosevic’s rise to power. See Stevanovic, \textit{Milosevic, The People’s Tyrant}, pp.24-33.
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{37} The Army was not a professional but an ideological force, a former pillar of Tito’s power. Although a 180,000 strong it was based on a professional core of command cadre, where the corps of generals were the real power holders. The rest was based on a rotating one-year mandatory service for all male citizens of the country. As a Party force the Army became directly involved in the solution of the Yugoslav crisis and political dispute about the future of the country, yet ideologically they offered uncompromising resistance to any political change especially diminishing of their influence, and therefore lost any credibility. See Miroslav Hadzic, “The Army’s Use of Trauma” in Popov’s \textit{The Road to War in Serbia}, 2000, pp.509-537.
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{38} Dimitrijevic argues that the Army joined Milosevic not because the majority of officers were Serbs and Montenegrins but rather for ideological closeness-they were hard-core communists. He backs this argument with the fact that none of the leading generals, who were retired in the nineties by then openly nationalistic Serbian authorities, continued public engagement as a Serb nationalist and they all regretted publicly the fall of communism on the world stage. He further speculates that had communism prevailed somewhere
\end{footnote}
real force that could back his march on power. In the years to come, the Army would tragically ally itself with the nationalistic leadership of Serbia, and turn their guns towards the rest of Yugoslavia.

The 1974 Constitution did produce an anomaly in Serbia’s status. Provinces were completely equal in status with republics, enjoying all the rights and duties of the sovereign state. While other republics were gaining strength, Serbia was rendered paralyzed on its own territory. Serbian elites complained and argued that the existence of two provinces was tolerable in a centralized state as the way of protecting the cultural rights of minorities, but unacceptable in new situation when provinces are practically turned into states that hold the power of veto, which prevents Serbia to function on its own territory. Although Serbia could not influence the decisions of its provinces or do anything on their territory without their consent, paradoxically, they were able to participate in the work of Serbian parliament and influence the decisions about the so-called “narrower Serbia.”

Milosevic now elevated the Serbian question right into federal public discourse. At the end of 1986 the constitutional reform was obviously needed to address Serbia’s complaints over its constitutional status, but also the issue of a dysfunctional federation. A commission was set up to prepare constitutional change. It was now officially admitted that as a result of “polycentric etatisme” the federation was completely paralysed. The decisions of the federal government and the collective Presidency were by now simply else and not in Serbia, a different outcome was quite possible. See Vojin Dimitrijevic “The 1974 Constitution as a Factor the Collapse of Yugoslavia, or as a Sign of Decaying Totalitarism” in Popov’s The Road to War in Serbia, 2000, p.416.

39 Dimitrijevic was one of the leading Yugoslav lawyers. He argues that the real flaw of the Constitution was that it stipulated that all decisions had to be brought by a consensus. Therefore, if any of the eight federal units opposed to any proposed decision, it would automatically paralyze the whole federal Parliament. The parliament was bicameral. In the lower chamber of the parliament (Federal Chamber) was constituted, equally as the upper one (The Chamber of Republics and Provinces), of an equal number of delegates from every unit and not according to the size of population, as is usual in federations. This clearly gave an advantage to the small republics and disadvantaged Serbia and other more populous units. See Dimitrijevic, “The 1974 Constitution as a Factor”, p.408.

40 For example the so-called narrower Serbia could not adopt its own budget without the consent of its provinces, on the other hand the provinces could bring their own budget without any consultations with Serbia. Serbia did try to change its status proposing constitutional changes in 1976, asking for integration (but not an elimination) of the provinces into the republic, but this was flatly rejected by the other republics and especially provinces. It has to be emphasized that this proposal at the time did not have any nationalistic overtones, but targeted the correction of this constitutional anomaly. See Pesic, “The War for Ethnic States”, p.31.
ignored or disobeyed by all republics and provinces. Yet, with Milosevic’s language becoming more assertive, and with Serbian nationalism awakened and openly in public discourse, the issue of recentralisation became inevitably identified with Serbian domination, and was seen as an attack on the very basis of Yugoslav society. Other republics generally acknowledged some need for reform of the paralysed system but tried to avoid an open confrontation with Serbia. Only Slovenia, whose political elites had equally lost any interest in Yugoslavia and jealously guarded its autonomy, had confronted Milosevic openly and started voicing loudly their demands for de jure confederation.

The Thirteenth Party Congress in June 1986 revealed a full magnitude of the existing rift between republican oligarchies. Differences between the two blocks, one demanding centralization and the other further decentralization, proved irreconcilable and restricted the discussion about the future of the country. The paralysis of the system and growing public discontent about it opened the door for Milosevic, who by now fully endorsed the agenda of Serbia’s nationalistic elites, to step into action.

On the road of securing the ‘reunification’ of Serbia, Milosevic turned towards populism, relying on well-organized and carefully staged massive rallies. These ‘spontaneous’ events sometimes involved tens of thousands of people who demanded action and immediate solution of the burning issues yet were colored with overly nationalistic tones, often with the open display of Chetnik insignia. In several well-staged mass gatherings, better known as “anti-bureaucratic revolution”, Milosevic overthrew the leadership of the Vojvodina, Montenegro and Kosovo and replaced them with people loyal to him. Despite the fact that he abolished provincial autonomy, he kept their votes in the Yugoslav presidency, now controlling four out of a total of eight votes. At the

---

41 Policymaking was ground down to the halt. For example, during 1983, only eight major laws were passed out of twenty-five presented to the Federal Assembly. Ramet, Yugoslavia in the 1980s, p.9. Between 1986 and 1988 the Presidency of Yugoslavia passed 322 resolutions in regards to certain questions, most of them were simply ignored and never carried out, except for those dealing with the military. In 1987 it was grudgingly agreed by the republics that minimum changes should be made to the legal system that would bring at least a railroad, postal and telephone systems under the central authority and that the economic system should be somewhat tightened up. Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.335.

42 The 1974 constitution introduced a body of Collective President made up nine members (one for each unit with Tito as the president for life who presided over the body). After Tito’s passing the eight members Presidency will continue to lead the country on the basis of a rotating chair. Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p. 327.
time Milosevic was still claiming that his goal was reversing the unjust effect of the 1974 Constitution on Serbia, for which he secured the uneasy consent of other republics, which were hoping that this move would satisfy his appetites.

Over the last part of that decade in Serbia the unusual symbiosis and anti-modern coalition emerged. It was forged by the communist elite, backed by the Army who was defending their own interest, on one side, and the Serbian Orthodox Church and nationalistic intellectuals, on the other. Together they rode on the massive populist wave they created with the help of the media they controlled. Inevitably this would take Serbia into self-imposed isolation and then open confrontation with the rest of Yugoslavia. They were simultaneously a unique product and a last defender of the collapsing communist regime, who resisted any economic and political change. Nationalism was their last chance to remain in power by effectively replacing the burning social and political issues with the ethnic question. Pesic argues:

“Although their motives were different, the actions of the two elements of this ‘black-red’ coalition were complementary and together they launched the aggressive policy of the destruction of Yugoslavia: either Yugoslavia would be a state on Serbian terms (a ‘real’ federation); or Serbia, with weapons in hand (‘if needed’) would move along the Serbian path - the path towards the creation of

---

43 In October of 1988, a massive rally of 100,000 Milosevic’s supporters forced the leadership of Vojvodina to resign. In January 1989 same fate met the leadership of Montenegro. The leadership of Kosovo gave much more resistance yet they gave in under overwhelming pressure. On March 29, 1989 both Provinces were stripped of autonomy and Serbia was proclaimed ‘reunited’. On May 8, 1989 Milosevic took the place of President of Serbia. Milosevic would probably have had a harder time if the other republics had stood united at the time. None of them objected to his actions in hope of pacifying him. Besides, the issue of Kosovo was so complex and messy that everyone wanted to stay away from it. With massive rallies Milosevic unleashed the destructive power of populist nationalism, releasing its energy on the streets of Yugoslavia and introduced the rule of the mob into political discourse. See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, pp 350-354.

44 In Tito’s regime the Academia enjoyed similar privileges assigned to the political elite. This was a way of pacifying them, undermining the independence of intellectuals and eliminating any possibility of an organized political opposition. As Perovic argues this symbiosis between the Serbian leadership and the national academy would prove as the lasting connection providing communist leadership with the intellectual legitimation for their nationalistic turn coating. In return, the academy, betraying all professional and intellectual standards, gained material and political support, and freedom to act as a representative of all the people and as a dominant voice in the definition of the national programme. This in the case of Serbia would produce catastrophic results, as it would take Serbia in self-imposed isolation and away from the liberal European values that were always present, although never dominant, in Serbian political culture. Moreover, by ignoring the interests and voices of all other non-Serbs in the common state, it would ultimately lead into the destruction of Yugoslavia. See Latinka Perovic, “The Flight from Modernization” in Popov’s The Road to War in Serbia, 2000, pp.109-121.
Greater Serbia, in which all Serbs would gather. Yugoslavia was constantly on their lips - but in the majority of cases they were thinking of some other state called by the same name.”

At the end of the eighties Serbia was awash in nationalism, trumpeted by all institutions of the system. The newly assertive Orthodox Church and the media tightly controlled by the government were used by the system to further exploit the symbolism of Kosovo and a fervent effort emerged to establish it again as the center of Serbia’s statehood and history. The myth about the Kosovo battle was resurrected once again with the extensive help of the media. The Serbian state helped organize a celebration of the anniversary of the fateful battle all over Yugoslavia where Serbs lived. In a rather bizarre ceremony, the remains of the Tsar Lazar were carried around after 600 years throughout areas populated by Serbs, clearly delineating the territory of the earthly Great Serbia that Milosevic was soon to claim.

On June 28, 1989, St. Vitus day, the republic’s party and the federal leadership were summoned to the legendary Field of Blackbirds for the celebration of the 600 years anniversary of the famous battle. In an atmosphere that could be best described as the ultimate ethnic kitsch, in front of a million people, TV cameras and uneasy Yugoslav

---

46 The Orthodox Church that was repressed for a long period of time now became a new darling of the regime. The extensive ties were quickly established with Milosevic’s government. The church was offered a renewal of its historical influence as a spiritual leader of the Serbian state and material support to build many new churches. In return the church offered unwavering support to Milosevic’s regime giving it legitimacy, and recognizing Milosevic as the leader of all Serbs. The Church played an especially prominent role in the process of the revision of history and opening the old wounds of WW II. An unprecedented access to the media and public life was given mostly to militants from its ranks, who started publicly voicing their resentment towards the Roman Catholic Church, the Islamic community, and openly fanning the flames of hate. The leadership of the Church initiated opening the caves that served as mass graves for the victims of Ustasha terror in WW II ‘so they can be given a proper burial’. The head of the Orthodox Church relocated the regular annual meeting of the Church Sabor to Jasenovac, so he can mark the fiftieth anniversary of Serbian suffering in WW II. Yet, it has to be stressed that Milosevic harnessed the force of the Church and Serbian nationalism for his own purposes, without ever showing any signs of particular sympathy for nationalism or religion himself. He rather used them exclusively as a tool in consolidating his absolute power. As Stevanovic argues: “Milosevic neither accepted the traditions of his new ally nor played the religious man. His communist heart despised the Church; but nationalist he had become obliged him to court it. His aim in power was not that he should serve the nation, state and the Church. It was that all three should continue to serve him. He was privatizing the state - making it his own.” Stevanovic, Milosevic, p.55.
47 Twelve years later on the very same day Milosevic was extradited to the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia in Hague.
leadership, Milosevic delivered a speech to the rest of Yugoslavia in the form of a disguised ultimatum, offering a grim choice: accept a Serbian seniority within a centralized Yugoslavia or get ready for a war.48

Milosevic was now ready to move against the rest of the country. With full control over the provinces, the Army, the Church, as well as massive public support in Serbia, four votes in the presidency of Yugoslavia, Kosovo was again a springboard, this time for the conquest of Yugoslavia. He challenged other republics to allow his meetings of solidarity with Kosovo Serbs to be held in all republic capitals. Recognizing the fact that those meetings were efficient machines for overthrowing the existing regimes, the other republics declined permits. His arguments for a strong central state were now colored with open nationalistic discourse. The offers of protection were extended to Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, which according to Milosevic’s propaganda machine were endangered from their fellow republican citizens. The other republics started voicing their dissatisfaction with his style of politics, yet failed to produce a common front of defence.49

In January of 1990 the Fourteenth Extraordinary Congress of the Communist Party was convened to address the state of political paralysis. The congress only proved that the accumulated differences between republics’ leaderships were unbridgeable. Milosevic tried one more time to regain control of the federal party, yet, his style of

48 Milosevic spoke: “Six centuries later, we are once again in the battles and facing the battles. Those battles are not armed, but armed ones cannot be excluded either”. On the celebration of the 600 year anniversary of the famous battle see Misha Gleny, The Fall of Yugoslavia, The Third Balkan War, Penguin Books, 1992, pp.31-5.
49 Again, only Slovenia confronted Milosevic head on. Slovenia was always the most Western-oriented Yugoslav republic with the most developed economy and best developed institutions of civil society, such as freedom of the press and public opinion. Its communist leadership, led by Milan Kucan, was much more attuned to the needs of its constituency. It was also the only ethnically homogeneous republic. The membership in Yugoslavia was always a matter of convenience for Slovenian political elites and by now they had lost all interest in that membership. Just before the war, Slovenia was paying 25% of the federal budget although it made only 8% of the population of Yugoslavia. Kucan confronted Milosevic over constitutional amendments that were supposed to restore central power, yet acting as an advocate of the Albanian population now repressed by Milosevic clampdown of Kosovo. The war of words escalated into the boycott of Slovenian goods in Serbia and massive rallies of condemnation. The Croatian Communist Party was divided between conservatives, led by Stipe Suvar, who was at the same time President of the federal Party, and liberals. They occasionally sided with Slovenians but decided to stick to the vow of so-called “Croatian silence”, because of the possible backlash that the confrontation with Milosevic on a federal level could produce among the Croatian Serbs. Bosnia was preoccupied with keeping an uneasy peace in its own yard, careful not to upset its delicate ethnic balance. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.350.
arguing from the position of arrogance, outvoting and ignoring all others, failed to achieve anything but to deepen the crisis. At the end, the bullied Slovenian delegation simply left the congress. Milosevic proposed to proceed without them, but delegations from Bosnia and Croatia declined. The Party that enjoyed political monopoly in ruling Yugoslavia for forty-five years, simply dissolved by itself, opening the way for political pluralism and final disintegration of the country.

The Media Wars

The Serbian intellectual and political elite was the first who saw their interest shifting away from Yugoslavia. This meant that the identities of their constituency had to be shifted towards the exclusive values of the unique Serb identity, rejecting and moving away from the wider form of Yugoslavism. Their plural identities had to be reduced to narrower margins of nationality in order to motivate them to see their compatriots - as well as neighbors and even family members - of forty odd years as ‘Others’ and ultimate enemies. People had to be transferred from the state of peace to the state of conflict and ultimately a war. In order for this to occur a lethal weapon of media propaganda was utilized.

For the next several years the people of Yugoslavia would be exposed to an unprecedented media campaign of nationalist hysteria and hate speech, necessary to produce the ethnic homogenization to legitimize the wars that would follow. This process was the most extreme in Serbia and only to a slightly lesser degree in Croatia. All republics would eventually master the trade of absolute control over media and use it as the main and most-powerful tool to pursue their goals. Milosevic established the matrix during the mid eighties, which was then followed by everyone else. He abandoned the “moribund socialist terminology in favour of a language of demagogy and headlong irrationality, of rhetorical questions and exclamations, of destiny and mission: a ‘celestial people’ confronting its fate; a language of menacing ultimatums, of infinite self-pity, of immense accusations backed by no evidence or investigation; of conspiracy-mongering,
paranoia, and brazen incitement to violence. It was, in fact, a language of war before war was even conceivable in Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{50}

One of Milosevic’s first moves upon securing power was to seize authority over the media. This was done by the systematic purge of traditionally liberal Belgrade newspapers and especially Serbian TV, turning most of them overnight into a launching pad for hate speech.\textsuperscript{51} The national question re-emerged in Serbian public discourse, replacing or distorting all other issues. Old grievances and national resentment were shamelessly exploited as Serbs, as a nation, were seen to be victimized daily. Yugoslavia was now proclaimed a colossal mistake; its institutions were rapidly delegetimized. Other republics people and leadership were attacked as being intolerant to Serbs, who were in daily-fabricated stories, facing threats everywhere they lived.

During the four years of this systematic campaign of fear and hatred Milosevic significantly undermined federal Yugoslavia and Tito’s legacy of multicultural coexistence and national equality. The exaggerated stories from the past, emphasizing hundreds of years of Serb suffering under the Ottomans (now identified with the Bosnian Muslims), Croats (exclusively identified with Ustasha regime) and Albanians (as eternal enemies), were retold on a daily basis. They were joined by the ‘New World Order’ (Western democracies, led by Germans and Americans) and, last but not least, domestic traitors and ‘bad Serbs’ (democratic opposition in Serbia).\textsuperscript{52} All contingent historical

\textsuperscript{50} Thompson, \textit{Forging War}, p.53.
\textsuperscript{51} First he took on influential daily \textit{Politika}, weekly \textit{NIN} and Serbian TV, gradually extending his control to almost all popular press and radio stations, establishing almost absolute control over Serbia’s media space. During this time Serbs were isolated from sources of information coming from the other republics as they, under the Milosevic’s assault, withdrew from the exchange of political programs and news on a federal level. The Serbian media was purged of independent voices that were replaced with a ‘reliable cadre’ willing to cooperate with the regime. Dissenting journalists were intimidated, threatened, marginalized and in most extreme cases even executed. One by one the bruised and battered media surrendered. A handful of those who continued offering resistance, such as \textit{Vreme} and \textit{Nasa Borba} to name just a few, had a limited influence and audience. Over the next few years the media constantly produced enemies, forged facts about the past, openly fanning the flames of intolerance and hatred, and prepared actively the spiral of violence that was to follow. In the atmosphere of nationalistic hysteria no one questioned the objectives or the consequences of Milosevic’s political programme. On media in Serbia see Thompson, \textit{Forging War}, pp.51-130.
\textsuperscript{52} Serbian propaganda created a “separate universe” detached from reality in which Serbs were always attacked and always defending themselves and their centuries old homes, only responding to the provocations of their merciless enemies. The pinnacle of that kind of propaganda was the coverage of the war in Bosnia and a four years siege of Sarajevo. With the help of media the fact of besieging the city, which could hardly be denied by anyone, was turned inside out into mind-boggling argument that Muslim authorities are in fact bombing themselves while ‘Serbs continue to defend their positions on centuries-old
misfortunes were now interpreted as a vast conspiracy against the Serbian nation. Yesterday’s brothers and compatriots were slowly turned into distrustful foreigners and finally into enemies that should be removed.

Explaining the reasons why people who lived together peacefully for fifty years turn on each other with such brutality Thompson argues:

“People’s bedrock attitudes toward the wars in Croatia and Bosnia are not created by the state media; rather, the media play variations upon those attitudes, which derive from other sources (national history, family, background, education, oral culture). Media did not inject their audiences with anti-Muslim prejudice or exploitable fear of Croatian nationalism. The prejudice and fear were widespread, latently at least; there was a predisposition to believe ‘news’ which elicited and exploited the prejudice. Media could not produce a nationalist society; without the media, however, Serbia’s leaders could not have obtained public consent and approval of its extreme nationalist politics.”  

Propaganda is the main reason why generations that knew nothing but years of ‘brotherhood and unity’ and cosmopolitism of Tito’s Yugoslavia, eventually bought into this rabid nationalism. The disintegration of the old identity and its replacement with another one was a gradual process that took place under the relentless assault of media and against the background of war and national homogenization. Serbian writer Dragan Todorovic describes this process in Belgrade, a well-known place of resistance to Milosevic and his policies of war. Although nobody believed Milosevic’s arguments at the beginning, the relentless attack of media placed the first cracks in the levees holding the wider Yugoslav identity. Slipping under the radar of conscience, amplified with an overwhelming feeling of helplessness and self-denial, the sense of solidarity with the others was gradually eroded. The doubts were small at the beginning and resistance

---

53 Thompson, *Forging War*, p.128.
almost universal, yet after a few short years of toxic propaganda almost everyone bought into the story:

“How did we allow, and when did we allow –this regime to start changing us? It is that simple: when you became tired and sleepy, the Goebbels rule slips in and we all believe in lies repeated long enough. It meant that Sarajevo was not the only city under siege; so were Belgrade, and Kragujevac, every town in Serbia. On the hills around Sarajevo were Serbs from Bosnia hitting people with snipers and shells, turning them into memories; at the hills around our brains were Serbs from the media, hitting us with news and opinions, turning us into zombies.”

A Perfect Enemy

Milosevic needed a formidable archenemy, the mirror image of himself, which he would soon find in the first freely elected president of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman. He was better known for his leadership in the Maspok movement in the early seventies, which earned him several years of jail time and his reputation among various extremist circles at home and abroad. Unlike Milosevic, who could better be described as Bolshevik that was executing program of nationalistic Serbian intellectuals, Tudjman, a retired Yugoslav Army general, turned historian, was rather a fierce Croatian nationalist. His party,

55 See chapter 4, pages 90-5.
56 Tudjman stirred a controversy already in the pre-election campaign with controversial statements such as that “he is happy that his wife is not Serbian or Jewish”, and that “all people are equal in Croatia, but it must be clear who is host and who is the guest”. The next scandal followed on the first convention of his party in February of 1990 when he gave legitimization to fascist NDH with the statement that the NDH “was not simply a quisling creation and a fascist crime; it was also an expression of the historical aspirations of the Croatian people to have an independent state”. Tudjman did not depend on other historians to start the process of the revision of past; as a historian himself, he was leading a pack. In his book “Wilderness” (Bespuca Povijesne Zbilnosti), released in 1989, he claimed that the stigma of collective guilt for the crimes committed by the NDH regime was imposed on Croats by the Communist regime in order to subjugate them in the second Yugoslavia. In order to remove that stigma he went into a revision of a number of Serb victims of the Ustasha regime. Claiming that Tito had exaggerated these numbers in order to claim a larger war reparation from Germany, he reduced the total number of NDH victims to under 70 000, which created a huge public scandal and played into a hands of Serbian nationalist who could finally back their arguments about the reawakening of the Ustasha state. See, Goldstein, Croatia, A History, p. 210. Also Udovicki&Todorov, “The Interlude”, p.94.
Croatian Democratic Union (hereby HDZ, for Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica) was formed in February of 1989. During the first multi-party elections in Croatia that took place in April and May of 1990, the party won 42 percent of the popular vote. Because of the electoral system, fixed by the outgoing Communist administration to favour the reformed Communist party, this vote yielded an absolute majority for Tudjman’s party in the new Croatian parliament.57

Milosevic understood that in order to achieve his goal of the Great Serbia he had to mobilize, first, Croatian and, afterwards, Bosnian Serbs. The first step was taken by manipulating the Croatian Serbs through the media, by spreading a campaign of fear by comparing the actual situation in Croatia with the one of 1941. It became obvious that Krajina’s leaders, who were also participating in the elections as the Serbian Democratic Party, were coordinated, orchestrated and even secretly armed from Belgrade.58 Yet, what contributed and greatly exacerbated the crisis was the lack of effort from Croatian authorities to demonstrate good will and to firmly guarantee safety and minority rights in what was looking to be an independent Croatian state. Tudjman rather chose the path of open confrontation with Croatia’s Serb minority. For Milosevic this was a gift from

---

57 It is questionable if Tudjman victory would be so decisive had he not be favored by the electoral system and helped by national homogenization, which was triggered as backlash to Milosevic’s relentless propaganda. The politically reactivated former liberal Communist leaders of the Croatian Spring, Savka Dapcevic-Kucar and Mika Tripalo led Croatian Social Liberal Party. They supported the institution of liberal democratic society within the frame of Yugoslavian confederation, but won only 20 percent of the popular vote. The reformed League of Communists won solid 30 percent of popular vote. Still because of election law, Tudjman’s HDZ had absolute majority in parliament. Goldstein, Croatia, A History, p.209-211.

58 Although the Croatian Serbs made up 12 percent of the population, the Belgrade-supported Serbian Democratic Party who won only 2 percent of the votes, mostly the votes of rural Serbs in the ethnically homogenous Knin region. The rest overwhelmingly voted for the reformed Communist Party. This can be attributed to the short time for organization of the election, but also tells about the fact that the majority of Croatian Serbs in the cities, despite apprehension that they might have felt in a new situation, were culturally well integrated in a Croatian society. Despite the fiery rhetoric of the some of the rural Serb leaders, as Raskovic or Djukic, the commission sent from Belgrade in 1990 found out that they did not see options for a Croatian Serb community outside Croatia, and that only 20 percent of surveyed inhabitants of Krajina were ready to fight their Croat neighbors and their independent state. As it is the truth that the disappearance of Yugoslavia would produce a sense of greater loss for the Serbian community, it is obvious that they would not start fighting on their own. Equally the majority of Croats did not feel that Serbs should be stripped of their national rights, which the results of the election clearly had shown. The radicalization of the Serb population, despite their justified underlying fear, had to be achieved by active involvement from Belgrade, by the replacement of local leadership with a more radical one (Martic and Hadzic) and the intensification of the fear campaign. This was than finished off by a radical approach and harassment by Tudjman’s government and the effects of ethnic homogenization within Croatia. See Magas, Croatia Through History, p.658.
heaven that gave credibility to his rhetoric at home and new munitions to his relentless propaganda.\textsuperscript{59}

Although the situation in Croatia hardly resembled the circumstances of 1941, Tudjman aligned himself with a number of hard-core extremists returning from emigration, and took firm steps in what he called ‘dismantling a legacy of Communism in Croatia.’ With an absolute majority in government and parliament, having secured a national consensus, the interests of Tudjman’s small party oligarchy were identified with the interests of the Croatian state and its people. His personal power grew unrestrained. Massive layoffs of Serbs from governmental institutions and police followed under the new rule of proportional representation; those remaining were required to take an oath of loyalty to the state of Croatia. In the new Croatian Constitution the Serbs were demoted from the status of the ‘constituent nation’ to the ‘national minority’. Desecration of monuments dedicated to the antifascist movement across Croatia took place, names of members of the Ustasha regime appeared on schools and street signs replacing those from the partisan resistance movement. The tide of nationalism took over Croatia.

Tudjman was resolved to use virulent nationalism as a tool in his own ascent and as a process of securing power. He followed the same path as Milosevic in taking over the media in Croatia, filling state television with a ‘reliable’ cadre, who soon abandoned all professional criteria and started broadcasting their own version of reality.\textsuperscript{60} This only

\textsuperscript{59} The atmosphere of fear and apprehension was fuelled from both sides. Milosevic’s propaganda was trumpeting about the returning genocide against the Serbs. On the other side Croatia ignored the Serb’s minority historically rooted fear and tried to aggravate it even more. Goldstein argues that that right wing of Tudjman’s government wanted a showdown with Serbs, believing that in the case of open Serbian aggression it would have a better chance to secede from Yugoslavia. Also, Tudjman was obsessed with what he saw as his ‘historical mission’ to create an independent Croatian state. Later published memoirs of leading Army general Kadijevic and Milosevic’s first man Jovic, confirmed that Serbia would try to conquer the ‘Serb lands’ regardless of who was ruling Croatia. Demonization of the Croats in Serbian media had begun and ended long before Tudjman had appeared on the political scene while liberal communist Racan ruled Croatia. Yet the less radical approach from the Croat side would probably undercut the support for rebellion and resulted in much better inter-ethnic relations after the war. Had Tudjman restrained himself from the massive dismissal of Serbs from police forces and treated them as state employees and citizens of Croatia it might have undercut their support for Milosevic’s policies. The Serbian population in bigger towns and cities remained passive and loyal to the new authorities despite being harassed by extremist and despite what was going on in the countryside. See Goldstein, \textit{Croatia, A History}, p.214-219.

\textsuperscript{60} Tudjman’s government, in spite of promises of the freedom of press and speech given in the pre-electoral campaign, was resorting to the same totalitarian ways of controlling its media, especially state owned TV. The government had a virtual monopoly on the airwaves; it resisted the existence of private media, while suppressing the existing ones. Any dissenting voices, as \textit{Feral Tribune, Danas} and \textit{Globus} to mention only
got worse after the beginning of the first armed skirmishes in Croatia. Like their Serbian counterparts, the media completely abandoned any professional standards and resorted, voluntarily, or under pressure, to propaganda, ethnic stereotypes, disinformation and sometimes even blatant lies:

“Nationalists politicians on both sides took the narcissism of minor differences and turned it into monstrous fable according to which their own side appeared as blameless victims and other side genocidal killers. All Croats became Ustashe assassins; all Serbs became Chetnik beasts. Such rhetorical preliminaries were an essential precondition of the slaughter that followed.”

Tudjman’s government, like Milosevic’s, was filled with communist turncoats who overnight become fierce nationalists, joining the ranks of extremists with the deep pockets from the Croatian émigré community, who were until yesterday, their official and sworn enemies. Again, as in the case of Serbia, a strange symbiosis of the Church, the nationalist intelligentsia and former communist elite was created. Together, with the help of the media they induced the state of collective amnesia, forgetting their differences, they started rallying around the new, exclusive, Croatian ethnic identity.

The one party system was successfully replaced with a slightly different one, still totalitarian, where all power belonged again to one party, a far cry from the ideal of Western democracy that was always on the Tudjman’s lips. The new regime resurrected a motley crew of Croatian heroes and martyrs from the national past, many of whom had nothing to do with each other. Calling on all main actors of long Croatian struggle for statehood, from Radic to Hebrang, from Jelacic to Stepinac, from Strossmayer to Starcevic, and, not shying away even from Pavelic; the national elite started the process

the most notable ones, were intimidated, marginalized and discredited as unpatriotic. Perhaps the most famous case of rallying journalist patriotism, was the one of a young journalist who publicly stated that she is ready to lie for Croatia, could be understood while Croatia was under the attack from Serbia as it tried to instill its population with patriotism until the international recognition is secured. Yet, this policy rather confirmed its true face when Croatia got involved in the Bosnian war, when the Croat media shifted into the same hate speech mode patented earlier by Serbia. The same blatant lies were used in the task of dehumanizing the enemy and justifying the crimes against the civil population of Bosnia. The speech was the same, only the actors were different. This time it was the good and just Croatian soldiers who were only defending their centuries old hearts and themselves from the ‘Chetnik beasts’ and ‘Muslim fundamentalists’. On media in Croatia, Thompson, Forging War, pp.130-200.

61 Ignatieff, Blood and Belonging, p.22.
of historical revision. The goal of this “eclectic nationalism”, as well as bringing some of the most traumatic events from World War II to the fore, now from a very different perspective, was not only a reconnection with the distant past but also the historical victimization of Croats as a nation. It only proved once again, as in the case of Serbia, how significant the mistake of Tito’s regime was to never open an honest dialogue about the past. Slavenka Drakulic writes:

“Now the time has come to count the dead again, to punish and to rehabilitate. This is called “redressing the injustice of the former regime”…The names of virtually all major streets and squares in the cities throughout Croatia have been changed - even the names of the cities themselves. The symbols, the monuments, the names are being obliterated…Thus altered and corrected; the past is in fact erased, annihilated. People live without the past, both collective and individual. This has been the prescribed way of life for the past forty-five years, when it was assumed that history began in 1941, with the war and revolution.”

The process is aimed at a change of identity, in which, a wider cosmopolitan civic identity is reduced to the narrow margins of an ethnic one, which another Croatian writer, Dubravka Ugresic, calls the parallel process of forgetting and remembering:

“Terror by remembering is a parallel process to terror of forgetting. Both processes have a function of building a new state, a new truth. Terror by remembering is a strategy by which the continuity (apparently interrupted) of

---

62 One of the first casualties of historical revisionism were the victims of the Bleiburg massacre (see chapter 4, pg. 73.), which were now were brought to the fore as an ultimate symbol of Croatian suffering and struggle under the communist rule. Croatian sociologist Zarko Puhovski argues that with a skilful manipulation of politicians and the media, this terrible incident from the end of the WW II, was given monumental importance and was turned into a myth that completely ignored the scarce historical facts surrounding it. Although the victims of the massacre were Croat anti-communist forces and civilians, but also Slovenes, Montenegrins, Bosnian Muslims, and the large number of Serb Chetnik forces, it became a symbol of solely Croat suffering. Manipulation of facts also generally implied that all victims were civilians only (by an argument that disarmed soldiers are civilians only), as well as that Yugoslav Army units that carried executions included Serb soldiers only. That way the Bleiburg massacre was presented as ultimate symbol of “Croat tragedy in the twentieth century”. The modern mythmakers conveniently ignored the fact that some of the ‘Croatian heroes’ from high Communist ranks, as Hebrang, as well as some, who were significantly lower in ranks and influence below him, as Tudjman or Bobetko, could have known something about that particular massacre and other executions that were carried out for weeks. Zarko Puhovski, “Manipulation of Bleiburg”, Novi List, Rijeka, May 22, 2004, retrieved from www.ex-yupress.com, on April 20, 2010.

63 Drakulic, Balkan Express, p.74.
national identity is established; terror by forgetting is the strategy whereby a ‘Yugoslav’ identity and any remote prospect of its being re-established is wiped out. Terror by remembering as a method of establishing a national identity does not shrink from national megalomania, heroisation, mythicisation, the absurd accepted lies, in other words.”64

Ugresic is accusing the political elite of introducing a “culture of lies”. By actively disseminating nationalism and introducing collective paranoia, against the background of war chaos and an information blockade, the elite facilitated the identification of citizens with their own goals. In an atmosphere of sudden existential insecurity and helplessness, the masses become easy to manipulate. The tectonic shift of social values and massive social change could be achieved only by the war and the terrible destruction that occurred within. History was rewritten; as one state ended on the ‘junkyard of the past’, another one was born. One identity was replaced with another:

“Such an abrupt transformation of values occurring in many spheres of everyday, cultural, political and ideological life has generated confusion in the heads of many citizens: bad has suddenly become good, left has suddenly became right. In this re-evaluation the blotting out of one’s personal life, one’s identity, a kind of amnesia, an unconscious or conscious lie have become a protective reaction which enables one quickly to adopt the new identity…After one set of ‘truths’ has been transformed into ‘lies’ and ‘lies’ transformed into ‘truths’, in the majority of cases the citizens will always bow to the majority.”65

Against the Wind

In 1990 almost all of the republic’s elites had abandoned the project of Yugoslavia. Ante Markovic, a Croat from Bosnia, was the newly elected premier of Yugoslavia. He was an experienced and successful technocrat, leading for a long time

---

65 Ugresic, *The Culture of Lies*, p.79.
one of the most successful Croatian economic enterprises, but also a representative of those forces within Croatia and Yugoslavia which still saw a solution for the crisis within the frame of Yugoslavia. Arguing the decisive divorce between state, party and economy, already in 1989, he had started an ambitious project of comprehensive market reforms, including sweeping privatization, and opened the doors to political pluralism.

Markovic’s successful reforms, for a brief period, stopped the galloping inflation stabilized the economy, and restored a trust in the failing common state. His enormous popularity across the country, especially in Bosnia and Macedonia was one further proof that the solution within the wider frame of Yugoslavism still did not lose its appeal for the majority of Yugoslavs, regardless of their ethnicity. Yet his push for an integrated economic system, divorced from any political control, was directly undermining the power of the republics’ political oligarchies. Political elites of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, together with the help of their powerful media, systematically undermined and sabotaged his promising policies.

Ironically, Slovenia right after achieving independence would continue to follow an economic policy similar program to Markovic’s. Today, Slovenia is the richest new member of the European Union. The Croatian leadership, similar to Slovenians, was

---

66 In the spring of 1990, Markovic’s approval rates were between 80 and 90 percent in all republics except in Slovenia and Kosovo where they reached 59 and 42 percent, respectively. On the level of the whole Yugoslavia his popular support was standing at 79 percent. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, p.129.

67 Sabotaging Markovic proved to be the only joint effort that already openly hostile national elites could agree on. Markovic was systematically ignored and denied time on TV and in the press in an already segregated informative space of different republics. To address the ‘informative blockade’ against him, he formed his own TV station Yutel. It was a last ditch effort to save common Yugoslav media space and provide professional and unbiased reporting to all Yugoslavia’s constituents. Yutel was indeed aspiring to the highest standards of professional journalism, gathering some of the best Yugoslav journalists. Respectful of Yugoslavia’s multicultural reality and anti-nationalist, it strived to promote a vision of a democratic and civic modern state through unbiased reporting. Yet, the example of its demise illustrate how tightly controlled republican media spaces were and how imposed segregation of media space was guarded and fiercely defended. From the beginning Yutel faced huge obstacles and a united front of opposition in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. At first the licenses for its broadcasting were denied in Serbia and Croatia. The decision was revoked under public pressure after the programme became extremely popular in Bosnia, Macedonia and Slovenia (despite the fact that its political elite constantly undermined and attacked Markovic’s reforms, they did allow the broadcast of Yutel. It quickly became very popular reaching 45 percent of the audience, even though that it was put in a late-night spot, at 11:30 at night). When provisional licenses were granted in Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia it was shown at 2:00 a.m. a time when everybody was asleep. Yet, Yutel’s neutral and objective path eventually collided with both Croatia and Serbia, at the beginning of the war in Croatia, when it was dropped from both TV programs. The Croatian government jammed the station’s signal and on several occasions Serbian nationalists broke into the studio in Belgrade and vandalized the station’s equipment. The team of journalists moved to Sarajevo where it worked until the outbreak of the war in Bosnia. There, the program remained extremely popular, reaching regular audiences of 70-80 percent. See Thompson, Forging War, p. 38-50.
obsessed with an opening window of opportunity to finally secede from Yugoslavia and establish its own state at any cost. Still, the main resistance was coming from Serbia whose political elite disliked Markovic’s argument of abolishing the party control of the economy. Also, his tight and responsible monetary policy was an obstacle for Serbia and its strategy of printing money to maintain social peace and to finance a future war.

Moreover, Markovic did not have any control over the federal institutions that he was supposed to be in charge of, especially the Army’s elite that was already pledging its allegiance to Milosevic, and who saw their privileges threatened with Markovic’s proposed cuts to military budget. Finally, Serbia illegally removed two billion dollars from the primary emission of the National Bank of Yugoslavia, delivering an ultimate act of humiliation. Last but not least, the West for whom Yugoslavia with the collapse of the Communism on the world stage had lost its strategic importance, failed to deliver necessary financial help to back Markovic’s reform, which might have averted the catastrophe that followed.

Markovic even tried to form his own political party, *Alliance of the Reform Forces of Yugoslavia*, banking on the success of his reforms and his genuine popularity across the country. Yet his party simply did not have a chance. Blocked at every step, Markovic failed to achieve any significant electoral results in the republics where his party participated in the elections. Nationalistic programs who were promising prosperity and western living standards without any sacrifices proved to be much more attractive to the masses. Markovic’s main problem, paradoxically, was that he tried to speak and act as a rational politician amidst a totally irrational tide of nationalism surrounding him. He was simply too late, yet his short-lived reforms gave hope, comfort and dignity to many Yugoslavs. Markovic reminded them once again why they should stay together, simultaneously symbolizing all lost opportunities and uniting them briefly for one more

---

68 Markovic’s party was formed on July 29, 1990. At that time the multi-party elections in Slovenia and Croatia had already taken place. He was hoping to capture Bosnia, where he was most popular, and than from there to build a base for federal elections at the end of the year. These elections never took place. Slovenia, threatened by popularity of Markovic’s programme that was affecting its decision to leave Yugoslavia, was insisting on holding republican elections prior to the federal poll. Its leadership adamantly rejected any other solution, including a proposed referendum on the future of the whole Yugoslavia. As Woodward proposes, the first democratic elections were rather closing than opening the choice for Yugoslavia and its citizens. See Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p.118.
last time before all hell broke loose. In the words of the last American ambassador to Yugoslavia: “Markovic should have come immediately after Tito’s death.”

Slow Slide Towards Catastrophe

Communist regimes all over Eastern Europe started collapsing, culminating with the symbolical destruction of the Berlin Wall in October of 1989. The demise of Yugoslavia must be seen in the wider context of the Cold War; with its termination Yugoslavia lost all of its international strategic significance. Yesterday’s darling of the West, enjoying privileges for years, now found itself in the waiting room of Western Europe, equal in rights with the rest of the East European countries. Paradoxically, for the above-discussed reasons, the most open and liberal communist state found itself as a last bastion of Communism.

Multi party elections, held in republics during 1990, were generally free and fair, and brought new actors to the negotiating table about the future of Yugoslavia. Some of them were old communist leaders, repackaged, and bolstered by the newly obtained democratic legitimation to rule (Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro), but some of them were completely new such as the leaders of Bosnia and Croatia. Republics were already acting for a long time as sovereign states, yet the future of Yugoslavia was open for negotiation. Slovenes and Croats proposed Confederation, which Milosevic firmly rejected, equally as the former rejected any strong federation on the principle ‘one man one vote’ that Milosevic argued. When the presidents of Bosnia and Macedonia, two republics that because of their complicated ethnically mixed populations had the biggest stake in keeping Yugoslavia alive, proposed ‘asymmetric confederation’, a compromise that would accommodate somewhat equally all sides, but both Serbia and Croatia rejected it. When it became clear that Croats and Slovenes would never accept a highly centralized state that the Serbs requested again, from the ideological platform of the

---

69 Warren Zimmerman as quoted in Andjelic’s *Bosnia-Herzegovina, The End of a Legacy*, p.140.
‘Memorandum’, Milosevic steered his political ship openly towards the creation of a Great Serbia.⁷⁰

The Yugoslav People’s Army was never a professional but rather an ideological institution. Always a central pillar of Tito’s power, it was rather designed as an instrument to exercise its influence on the party’s life and civil authorities. With the situation in the country drastically changed it was impossible for the Army to stay unaffected. With predominantly Serb command cadre and Milosevic as a new guarantor of their status, they began actively to back his policies. In 1990, Ratko Mladic, a commander of forces in the Knin region, openly provided Croatia’s Serbs with weapons. Soon, with the extensive help of paramilitary forces imported from Serbia, the first armed skirmishes between Serbs and Croatian forces broke out. The Army moved between them with an official explanation of peacekeeping, yet rather helping one side to retain the conquered territory, while raising the tension and producing a backlash within another. A massive forced retirement of the general officer corps that was not compliant with the new role of the Army took place, followed with a purge in its lower ranks, this time along ethnic lines.⁷¹

Nothing helps homogenization like war - it is a perfect environment in which it is impossible to differ between propaganda and truth, between disinformation and a blatant lie from pure fact. What chauvinistic propaganda and hostile rhetoric of politicians on both sides could not achieve was left to the paramilitary armies, who quickly filled their ranks with small time criminals, former convicts and extremists of all colours, giving the true meaning to Samuel Johnson’s maxim that “patriotism is the last refuge of all

---

⁷⁰ Tus argues that the goals of the Army and Milosevic were not equal even at the beginning of the war in Croatia. The Army wanted to conquer the whole of Yugoslavia and Milosevic only the territories were Serbs lived, quoting that as the main source of conflicts and the improvisation in use of military power. Anton Tus, “Rat u Sloveniji i Hrvatskoj do Sarajevskog primirja” u Magas&Zbanic, Rat u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini, p.70.

⁷¹ In a period from 1991 to 1993, forty-three established, and possibly more independent, generals were forcefully retired and replaced with Milosevic’s loyalists. This secured a decisive shift of power in the Army’s leadership to those in favor of Greater Serbian nationalism. Lampe notes that shift in the upper echelons of the Army started already in the early 1980’s when Admiral Branko Mamula, a Croatian Serb, became a minister of defense and army chief-of-staff. See Donia and Fine, Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed, p.222. Also Lampe, Yugoslavia as History, p.345.
The officials tolerated their existence and in most cases operated in sync with them; in exchange for doing the dirty work they were provided with legitimacy and exclusive access to lucrative government sponsored jobs such as the smuggling of arms, oil, and cigarettes, as well as the unlawful acquisition of natural resources leading to quick enrichment of both sides. Soon these groups, always imported from the outside and rarely joined by locals, started staging the first armed skirmishes and removing moderates on both sides that still adhered to pacifism and values of common life.

War in Croatia

As much as Tudjman needed Milosevic’s arrogance, his destructive populist nationalism and constant bullying of other republics to achieve national homogenization in Croatia, Milosevic needed Tudjman’s aggressive xenophobia to support his credibility in Serbia. There his support started crumbling and he was facing massive street demonstrations and the beginning of a civil resistance movement.73 By actively

---

72 Paramilitaries were formed on all sides of the conflict, for different initial reasons. They were most prominent on the Serb side. The most notorious ones as Arkan’s ‘Tigers’ and Seselj’s ‘White Eagles’ were used not only as a tool to radicalize Croatian and Bosnian Serbs, but also to conduct a massive campaign of ethnic cleansing, rape and plunder for Milosevic’s regime. They were initially employed by the Milosevic regime and adopted under the umbrella of the Yugoslav Army to address a massive desertion from the regular arm forces and the resistance to the regular draft, which reached enormous proportions in Serbia at the beginning of the war. It is estimated that around 150 000 men left the country to avoid mobilization. In Croatia (forces of HOS and Zebras) and Bosnia (the Green Berets) were mostly adopted by official regimes as the forces that were the most ready to confront the first wave of Serbian aggression. As in Serbia, they were formed from local criminals recruiting members of the underclass already possessing the weapons, and not shrinking from any given task. During the war they proved useful in achieving the hidden agendas of political elites, as they could be employed to do any dirty job necessary and discarded equally as fast. Their activity was financed by the terror of the civil population, contraband and plunders. Stipe Sikavica, “The Army Collapse” in Udovicki&Ridgeway, Burn This House, pp.141-2.

73 The opposition to the Milosevic regime was persistent and impressive as it lasted from the first large demonstrations on March 9.1991, when Milosevic used tanks to confront the first serious rally of the opposition, to the last massive gathering resulting in his fall on October 5.2000. Constantly, for almost ten years, various opposition groups challenged the regime. On the other hand, the opposition was limited mostly to a few larger cities in Serbia, and Belgrade, as the countryside remained under the information blockade and proved to be a main supporter of his nationalistic programmes. However, over that period of time, Milosevic managed to marginalize the opposition and severely erode the fragile civil society, as he pushed even political opposition to adopt the language of nationalism. The struggle also resulted in a massive brain drain, as almost half a million educated young people fled Serbia during this time to start life in the West. Few independent media and NGO remained as a source of resistance (Woman in Black, the Center for Antiwar Action, the Civil Resistance Movement, the Helsinki Civil Parliament, to name just a
undermining Croatia’s stability Milosevic contributed to an ethnic homogenisation there more than any other politician, and granted Tudjman the mandate to marginalize any democratic political option. By clamping hard on the Serbian minority in Croatia, Tudjman gave Milosevic’s rhetoric at home credibility, justified his warmongering, and propped up his role as protector of Croatia’s Serbs.

Their relationship over the next few years would get hostile on the surface, yet much more friendly out of the sight of the public. As two sides of the same totalitarian coin, a perfect reflection of each other (although one looked more as a grim, old-fashioned, Bolshevik leader, and the other as a leading general of the South American military junta) they strengthened each other in the game of ethnic politics in which they both suspended all the institutions of the political system in their personal quests for ultimate power. Over the forthcoming years they sustained each other in power, complemented each other’s objectives and cemented their roles as the unchallenged leaders of their respective nations.

Both sides were fanning the fears of the Serbian minority in Croatia. Old fears had been awakened; rumours and panic were spreading through Serb and Croat communities as propaganda recalled the massacres from the Second World War, fomenting at the same time a call for vengeance. The ultimate mobilizer for the masses would prove to be not ideology but fear: “For the rank-and-file Serb in Croatia, the idea of a Greater Serbia meant a little, but fear for their own survival made them paranoid and bitterly aggressive…the authentic deep-seated fears of ordinary people for their lives and

few) yet their influence was limited. Udovicki&Todorov, “The Interlude”, p.94. See also Ivan Todorov, “The Resistance in Serbia”, in Udovicki&Ridgeway, Burn This House, pp.246-262.

74 It is an interesting phenomenon that was noticed by many that Milosevic and Tudjman, despite the heated chauvinistic propaganda they had unleashed on their nations, had never attacked each other. As Croatian intellectual Vlado Gotovac, a democrat and dissident in both regimes argued: “The partners in this scandal remained true to only one thing, that they would respect each other’s personal safety. Never did Tudjman attack Milosevic, or Milosevic attack Tudjman…The conflicts provoked by their politics never affected their personal relationship.” Gotovac as quoted in Stevanovic, Milosevic, and p.75. According to Stipe Mesic, who left Tudjman’s government over the disagreement about the Croatian involvement in the war in Bosnia, Milosevic and Tudjman met over 48 times. Tapes released soon after Mesic took office confirmed that it was as late as 1999 that Tudjman was still hoping to split Bosnia with Milosevic. Milosevic was indicted for war crimes and extradited to the International Tribunal for War Crimes in Hague, Netherlands, on St. Vitus Day in 2001. He died in Hague during the trial. Tudjman died of cancer in 1999. In 2001, Carla Del Ponte, the chief prosecutor of the International Tribunal, admitted that Tudjman was on the list to join Milosevic. His indictment was prevented by his death in 1999 and never made public. See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.584.
the survival of their families were used by Belgrade as justification for armed conflict and, ultimately, for the war for territories.”75

In January of 1991, the Serbs had proclaimed their independent Serbian Autonomous Region and its separation from Croatia, accusing Croats of the refusal to grant them cultural and political autonomy and demoting them to the status of national minority. Armed and supported by Belgrade, in a so-called “log revolution”, they were already blocking the roads and denying any access to these territories to the Croatian authorities since June 1990. Tudjman’s position within Croatia became only stronger with Milosevic and the Army’s approach of treating the Croatian government as illegal. Rebellious rural Serbs now kept under factual occupation more than one fourth of Croatian territory, from which all Croats were expelled. Slowly the majority of Croats started seeing independence as the only option. “The objectives of Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic complemented each other.”76

On June 25, 1991, Slovenia and Croatia claiming the right to secession declared their independence from Yugoslavia. The Army at first attacked Slovenia, quoting its constitutional duty to secure the borders of the Yugoslavian state. The Slovenian low intensity war lasted only ten days, prompting many to speculate that Milosevic let ethnically homogenous Slovenia go as he did not have any interests there, depriving Croatia of a powerful ally, and tipping the balance of power to his advantage. The Army withdrew to Croatia, de facto recognizing the Slovenian independence. At that time the Croatian government finally agreed to begin talks about the establishment of Serb autonomy in Croatia, but it was already too late. The Army by that time had already cleansed its ranks of all others but Serbs and aligned itself openly with nationalistic goals of the Serbian leadership. Just days after the full-fledged fighting started in Krajina region.

Croatia, along with Slovenia, was soon recognized as a sovereign state - an act remembered mostly by the controversial diplomatic efforts of Austria and Germany. The break out of a full-scale war in Croatia proved to be not only disastrous for Serbo-Croat relations but the point of no return at which Yugoslavia had ceased to exist. Yugoslavia

75 Ejub Stitkovac, “Croatia, The First War” in Udovicki&Ridgeway, Burn This House, pp.158-161.
76 Stitkovac, “Croatia, The First War”, p.161
withstood decades of Croatian nationalism; paradoxically it was Serbian nationalism that proved to be fatal for its existence for two simple reasons: “Serbs had been the largest national group in the federation and the dominant group in the army’s officer cadre.” 77

When the Army started levelling the beautiful baroque city of Vukovar that had for centuries witnessed Serbs and Croats living side-by-side, the Serbian paramilitary units were the ones who did the dirty job of massacring the civil population. Croatia, which was looking for international sympathy and recognition despite the opportunity to support the city’s defence, 78 failed to do so, prolonging the agony of the defenders. Equally to Serbia, it failed to mention that the defenders of this truly mixed community were not only the Croats. 79 The Army and paramilitaries levelled Vukovar, and massacred its surviving civilian population, not because it was the first city in Army’s march on Croatia nor because of its military importance. Turning Vukovar into a moon-like landscape was to demonstrate and confirm once and for all that Croats and Serbs cannot live together. 80 It was to eradicate any possibility of their common life in the future.

The six months of war in Croatia produced the destruction of cities and cultural artefacts, polarized communities, destroyed property and relations that had been built throughout the centuries. It further strengthened national homogenisation in Croatia and Serbia thereby opening the space for extremist on both sides. It also put the rest of the loyal Serbian minority in Croatia in the unenviable situation of having to bear the brunt of growing resentment and propaganda against the Serbs in general. The results of the destruction of six months war were appalling - yet nothing in comparison to what was to

---

77 Denitch, Ethnic Nationalism, The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia, p.112.
79 Thompson, Forging War, p.165.
80 Serbian architect and writer Bogdan Bogdanovic developed the thesis that one of the forces behind the rise and fall of every civilization was “Manichean battle between city lovers and city haters”, a battle present in every culture and nation in history. Sadly, he saw his theory confirmed in the practice of the devastation of many cities of his country. Some of the most important urban centers of Yugoslavia, most notably Dubrovnik, Vukovar, Mostar and Sarajevo would find themselves savagely attacked and destroyed by those who did not understand and feared city culture and did everything to eradicate it. As already noted he is not the only one who interpreted the war in Yugoslavia, as a war between “city builders” and “city destroyers”, as a clash of a city and country culture. See Boganovic, “City and Death” in Balkan Blues, Writing out of Yugoslavia, Northwestern University Press, 1994, p.54-5.
follow in Bosnia. The blockade of Croatian territories inhabited by Serbs in Krajina region, monitored by UN forces, lasted until 1995, while war in Bosnia was raging on.

Finally fed up with Milosevic, the Americans and Europeans committed to put an end to at least one chapter of the dragging Balkan crises by approving the actions of the Croatian Army in August of 1995, which triggered another wave of ethnic cleansing. In spite of the rhetoric of multiculturalism and reconciliation, these actions were running along lines of *realpolitik*. This time it was Croatian forces, armed and trained by Americans, in a well-planned action swept through the territory of the former Military frontier and pushed the Croatian Serbs into exile.

After using them as a goal for starting the war for territories, Belgrade washed their hands clean and simply discarded them. After three years of occupation of Croatia and a brutal war in Bosnia, the community of Croatian Serbs could hardly count on the sympathies of the West or the local Croat population that they had forced into exile four years earlier. Simply, nobody was willing to see these people, manipulated, misled and ultimately betrayed by their extremist leaders and Milosevic, as another civil victim of the senseless war for territories. Prisoners of Belgrade’s failed policy of Great Serbia; they were pushed into conflict with their neighbours with whom they coexisted with for four centuries. In the name of an imagined community they had destroyed their real one, which were now forced to leave.\(^{81}\)

\(^{81}\)The number of people who fled the territories of the former Military Frontier is still a subject of debate. Perhaps the best approach would be to recall the numbers of Serbs and Croats who lived there before the outbreak of war as Branka Magas did. The territory was inhabited by 204 000 Croats and 288 000 Serbs. In the first wave of cleansing all but a few hundred Croats were expelled. After the action of the Croatian Army, in 1995, only few thousand, mostly elderly Serbs were left. After the Croatian forces moved in, encountering almost no resistance several hundred Serbs were killed, their property burned and looted, action tacitly condoned by the Croatian authorities. See Magas, *Croatia Through History*, p.654. While a number of refugees ended up in neighboring Bosnia, where they took the homes of expelled Bosnian Croats and Muslims, the majority of them ended up in Serbia, where they were supposed to be used in another Milosevic’s plan, as the colonization force for Kosovo. The number of males were rounded up and sent back to fight in the Serbian Army in Bosnia. At the same time in Serbia, which officially never entered the war, 80 000 ethnic Croats and Hungarians were ethnically cleansed. Ultra nationalist Serbian Radical party of Vojislav Seselj and its paramilitaries attacked them after intimidating them for months. They were forced to leave their comfortable homes where they lived for generations. Officials in Serbia did nothing to protect their loyal citizens. Tudjman also issued a call to the Croatian Diaspora abroad, as well as to Croats from Central Bosnia to settle into the Krajina region. For officially unexplained reasons the territories in northern Bosnia (Posavina), under Croat control were abandoned and given to Serbs. All of this fits within a larger picture of agreement between the political elites of Serbia and Croatia, about the massive resettlement of populations, in Tudjman’s cynical dictionary called “humanitarian moving of the people”. Judah proposes that rather than discussing the secret deals of the leaders about exchange of the territories
Bosnian Tragedy

The situation in Bosnia just before the war was similar to the rest of Yugoslavia. Bosnians were tied by the common bond of resignation and widespread existential fear, amplified with the possibility of war and its inconceivable outcome to a Bosnian multicultural mix.82

As argued in the previous chapter, in the late seventies and early eighties the Communist rule in Bosnia had produced a rapid industrialization and urbanization, which caused a massive movement of the rural population into the cities. The particularly strong rule of the Bosnian communist leadership had produced a tightly controlled, secular environment in which the Bosnian tradition of multicultural exchange could flourish.83 On the downside this arrangement left civil society undeveloped, lagging even behind the other republics of Yugoslavia.

Towards the end of the eighties the ruling Communist elite ended up stuck in a series of financial scandals that further undermined their already shaken popular legitimacy. The most notable of them was the Agrokomerc affair84 that exposed all and population that situation should be viewed as one in which every side tried getting rid as many as possible of the other ethnic group, in an effort to secure its post war dominance on cleansed territories. Judah, *The Serbs*, p.309. See also Stitkovac, “Croatia: The First War”, p.165-6. Also, Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p.390.

82 As Serbian independent journalist Milos Vasic stated: “The possibility of war in Bosnia was so appalling to everyone that it bordered on the unthinkable, like a global thermonuclear war, from the Yugoslav standpoint.” Vasic as quoted in Thompson, *Forging War*, p.230.

83 Bosnian Communism paradoxically acted as a replacement for a non-existent Bosnian nationalism, as the Bosnian nation state could not exist with three separate nations. Bosnian communist leadership carefully treaded the policy of national equity and proportional representation in all state organs and party life. Preservation of ethnic stability and harmony was in fact not only a reason, but also a justification for the strong rule in Bosnia. From the top of the political pyramid all the way down to the lower ranks the principle of proportional representation was rigorously imposed, securing the full equality of all citizens. That way the potential domination of any ethnic group was precluded. Leaders, regardless of their ethnic background, were never ethnic leaders but always acted in the interest of the whole constituency, ethnic incidents were extremely rare, and always ruthlessly sanctioned. However, Andjelic argues that many who analyzed the collapse of Bosnian society and saw it predominantly in the light of its principal factors, first Serbian and than Croatian aggression, often neglect an equally important factor of Bosnia’s internal weakness, stemming from the combination of fast development, rapid urbanization and the lack of a civil society. He argues that if communist leadership, after years of iron rule, did not discredit itself in such a way that it produced a total collapse of the system, ethnic politics perhaps would have a lesser chance to become dominant in Bosnian society. See Andjelic, *Bosnia-Herzegovina, The End of a Legacy*, p.38-9.

84 Agrokomerc was a food producing and processing company in northwestern Bosnia, employing 13 500 people, led by a charismatic politician Fikret Abdic. Abdic owed his ascent to his political mentor Hamdija Pozderac, party veteran and the member of Federal Presidency, who was at the time also acting as the head of the commission for changes of federal Constitution. Abdic became director of Agrokomerc in 1967, and
maladies of the Yugoslav economic system. Disgraced by the outcome of the scandal most of the Bosnian political elite that had ruled the country for the last twenty years, resigned and were forced outside of political life.

The new communist leadership that followed the disgraced old guard bridged the period until the first multi-party elections. Although weakened by the lack of popular support they did manage to open the public space for discussion about the tenets of the system. Paradoxically, now Bosnia, for a brief moment, became a more liberal and democratic place than its immediate neighbours, Serbia and Croatia, where the nationalist tide turned their media and public space into a tightly controlled territory by their political elites.

The period between 1987 and 1991 was characterized with the emergence of a weak civil society, an independent media (especially youth press) and a vague image of the concept of public opinion. The brief encounter with an emerging civil society could not last against the background of a disintegrating Yugoslavia. This power vacuum was quickly filled with the help of Belgrade and Zagreb, by ethnic politics that in the case of Bosnia proved to be disastrous to its very existence. Yet, for a brief moment it offered an illusion that a liberal and independent Bosnia could emerge.

After that, the enterprise grew rapidly pulling the whole region out of poverty. Yet, what looked on the surface, as a stellar success was in fact a house of cards. Abdic was issuing unsecured promissory notes in order to obtain bank loans to cover the losses. The funds were borrowed from 63 banks and in total reached 865 million dollars, equal to the profit of the entire Bosnian economy for two and a half years. It resulted in a huge political scandal, exposing political leadership for the first time to open criticism and the public demands for change. Abdic, Hamdija Pozderac and his brother, who were involved in the cover-up of the Agrokomerc financial machinations, had to resign all of their posts. The affair indirectly even triggered the fall of Mikulic’s federal government. After the Agrokomerc scandal, media in Bosnia become much more free to report and uncover new examples of misbehaviour of the closed political system. Attacking for the first time - until yesterday the untouchable establishment - they started challenging the system of patronage, privileges, and nepotism. Agrokomerc was a political earthquake of enormous magnitude in Bosnia and Yugoslavia as it uncovered the common practice in Yugoslav economy and exposed its true state. See Anjelic, *Bosnia-Herzegovina, The End of a Legacy*, pp.57-64. See also, Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, pp.330-1.

Before the first multi-party elections and the attempt of ethnic parties to subjugate them, the media opened the public debate about the premises of the system, contributing to overall democratization and liberalization of the system. Bosnian media retained their independence and high professional standards until the outbreak of war, managing to provide an even presentation of totally opposite views from Belgrade and Zagreb through the professionally balanced but still unique Bosnian view. Overall pre-war media emphasized Bosnian sovereignty and carefully avoided any division along ethnic lines. Yet, this openness of Bosnia’s media space to the influence of other republics would paradoxically prove to be a contributing factor to the collapse of Bosnia. On media in Bosnia, Thompson, *Forging War*, pp. 201-266.
As already argued, the rift between the rural and urban was bigger in Bosnia than anywhere else in Yugoslavia. Despite the success in eradicating illiteracy (especially among younger generations), rapid industrial development and urbanisation, Yugoslavia in general failed to seal the gap between its cosmopolitan cities and its rural populations who populated their edges, establishing one of the most important fault lines in society.86

In Bosnia this gap was even more exposed. Bosnian cities were traditional places of ethnic integration and hosts to genuine multicultural exchange and growth of a secular culture. The population in villages and ethnically segregated towns was often still harbouring memories of World War II, nurturing the image of the ‘Other’, giving primacy to patriarchal values and ethnic exclusivity. In the case of Bosnian Serbs and Croats, they often pledged their loyalty to their respective ethnic leaders outside of Bosnia. Andjelic is correct when he argues that at that time in Bosnia there were two parallel worlds in existence:

“One was on a path of democratization and economic change. Its supporters lived in urban centres and were ever present in public and in the media, although the question remains whether they were in a majority even in the urban centres. The other world was less educated and was composed of people living in the smaller towns and villages. These people were more concerned with their own ethnic background. They were majority without a public voice. When democracy and the multiparty elections came, they would be equal and the choice would be made by those occupying this second world.”87

86 Industrial development and the urbanization that went along with it decreased the number of agricultural peasant population to only 20 percent in 1981. Rates of illiteracy remained relatively high at 14.5 percent, although illiteracy was virtually eradicated among younger generations. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, this massive movement of the population often produced the “ruralisation” of cities, as the masses of unskilled peasant labourers often resisted assimilation into a cosmopolitan culture of the cities. See Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.334. Wachtel brings to our attention that the first surveys conducted in 1969 in Serbia confirmed that rural segments of population, less educated and with stronger ties to the church and the traditional patriarchal values, were far more receptive to the nationalistic programme that they will be called to serve two decades later. All of this corroborates the thesis of interpretation of the latest war not as much as a war between ethnic groups, but equally as a war between country and city. See Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, p.193-5.

Nevertheless, in the face of all these fault lines, the majority of the already impoverished population was clearly unsupportive of ethnic conflict. Despite the growing social discontent and deep existential fear stemming from a long economic crisis, the disintegration of a common state and a rising tide of nationalism in Serbia and Croatia, the mobilization along ethnic lines still had to be imported to Bosnia. Nationalistic incidents were still very rare even in 1989 and the largest number of adherents to Yugoslav identity was recorded in Bosnia.\(^8\)

One Country, Three Nationalisms

As discussed earlier, Bosnians were the same people divided by their different religious affiliation. The social changes from the beginning of the nineteenth century translated those differences into a division along national lines. In their complicated past, Bosnians of three faiths failed to develop a single national identity or to reconcile fully their complex and often conflicting identities.\(^9\) While other republics could function as nation states, Bosnia could not. Although some common cultural Bosnian identity always existed, it was weakened by the tide of nationalism outside and inside its borders. Bosnian Croats and Serbs could not stay unaffected by the events in Croatia and Serbia. The disintegration of Yugoslavia could not leave Bosnian Muslims indifferent to those changes. As in the case of other republics, one disappearing sense of identity had to be

\(^{88}\) Nearly one fifth of Sarajevo’s population declared themselves as Yugoslav in 1981 census. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.337. A survey conducted in 1988 showed that most of the people still expressed a positive attitude towards Yugoslavia and the life together. 79.6 percent of surveyed Serbs and Croats, 83.9 Muslims and 86.2 Yugoslavs expressed a positive attitude towards Yugoslavism. Andjelic, *Bosnia-Herzegovina, The End of a Legacy*, p.71.

\(^{89}\) Lovrenovic quotes Srecko Dzaja when he locates the source of Bosnian disunity in the fatal flaw that turned to be a most consistent attribute of Bosnian past for five centuries. That is cultural and political loyalty of Bosnians of all three faiths to their respective centers of political and cultural power outside of Bosnia (Bosnian Muslims to Istanbul and other centers of Islam; Serbs to the Patriarchate of Pec, Moscow and Belgrade; and Croats to Rome, Vienna and Zagreb). Yet, as Lovrenovic stresses, it is crucial to understand the duality in the cultural identity of Bosnians. While isolation stemming from divided loyalties, characterized the realm of high culture, there was a high degree of overlapping and integration in the realm of culture of everyday life. In Bosnia three different cultures imbue each other deeply, existing simultaneously as one unique and three separate traditions. The complex interchange was an essence of Bosnian cultural identity. Ivan Lovrenovic, *Bosna, kraj stoljeća*, Durieux, Zagreb, 1996, p.109 and pp.9-19.
replaced with a new one. People eventually overwhelmed with a tide of existential fear, opted for things that divided them.

The rise of Milosevic and the introduction of his particular chauvinist discourse could not go ignored in Bosnia. It was a coveted territory by Serbian nationalists for a long time and held a large Serb population. Quickly Milosevic became a polarizing factor in Bosnia. As rural Serbs, more homogenous and less mixed than the population within the cities, started supporting his nationalistic policies, others followed in opposite direction. This divergence resulted in an ethnic homogenization, opening deep lines of division in Bosnian society. Milosevic’s pressure was relentless, well organized and had already proven successful in Croatia. His media was bringing stories about ‘Serb suffering’ in Bosnia, simultaneously victimizing them and offering them help and protection. What started at first as homogenization in ethnically pure enclaves soon overwhelmed the republic and its institutions.

The result of the elections in Croatia, which brought Tudjman’s party to power, further complicated the Bosnian situation, bringing the Serbo-Croat clash into Bosnian territory. Tudjman’s rhetoric, openly challenging Bosnian existence and revealing his intentions towards its territory were soon to reconcile with Milosevic’s at their secret meeting in Karadjordjevo, where they conspired to divide Bosnia.

Ethnic parties soon formed on Bosnian soil, further separating the interest of Serb, Croat and Muslim nationalists. These three parties were the ‘Trojan horse’ with which ethnic division finally entered the Bosnian polis. With them the historical fault lines underlining Bosnian society were resurrected, emphasized, and ultimately used as an argument to break Bosnia apart.

---

90 According to 1991 census the 4 350 000 Bosnians were divided as follows: 43.7 percent Muslims, 31.4 percent Serbs, 17.3 percent Croats, 5.5 percent Yugoslavs, and 2.1 percent of “others”. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, p.337.

91 Many members of the local comities of the Communist party in predominantly Serb towns started supporting Milosevic and his policy, signaling the disintegration of the popular base. In 1990, Milosevic had started aggressively ‘exporting’ his “antibureaucratic revolution” to other republics in order to destabilize them. He demanded permits to stage his “meetings of truth” in support of Kosovo Serbs in other republic’s capitals. Bosnian Communist leadership, after the consultation with district comities, rejected to provide permits for these massive gatherings. Yet, fifteen local comities in the municipalities with Serb majorities voted against the decision. This signaled that the disintegration of otherwise monolithic leadership had begun, as well as opening the rift between the communist leadership and the Serb population. Andjelic, *Bosnia-Herzegovina, The End of a Legacy*, p.111.
Since the media remained independent until the election, nationalists mostly operated through channels of their respective churches. The newly resurgent Orthodox Church, and the Islamic Community, along with the traditionally strong and influential Catholic Church became the main channels for dissemination of programs of ethnic division. At first these divisions were most evident among the rural population.92

The two ethnic parties belonging to the Bosnian Serbs - Serbian Democratic Party (hereafter, SDS for Srpska Demokratska Stranka) - and Bosnian Croats - Croatian Democratic Union, (hereafter, HDZ for Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica) - were organized by local Serbs and Croats, but controlled, financed and supported outside of Bosnia, by the Serbian and Croatian regime respectively. They quickly gained support of the rural population in the ethnically more homogeneous parts of the country. The third ethnic party of Bosnian Muslims was founded under the leadership of an old dissident of the communist regime Alija Izetbegovic.93 The program of his party - Party of Democratic Action (hereafter, SDA for Stranka Demokratske Akcije) - would be best

92 Bosnians were one people divided through history along confessional lines, and it is logical that religion was used again in delineating differences that separated them. Bosnians had intermingled for centuries, often changing their religious affiliation back and forth for different reasons, and shared many common traits. Bosnian Muslims before the war were certainly the most secularized Muslim population in the world, a far cry from the picture of fundamentalism that Serbian and Croatian propaganda painted them. Urban Bosnian Serbs and Croats had culturally more in common with each other, and with Muslims, than with their ethnic kin in Serbia and Croatia respectively. Mixed marriages within cities were common and differences among nationalities there, blurred almost to the point of no recognition.

93 Izetbegovic was a very different politician than Milosevic and Tudjman. His work and his legacy have yet to be fully studied by historians, as there is a fundamental confusion and disagreement in his political program. Although imprisoned twice by the Communist regime, in 1946 and 1983, on charges of Islamic fundamentalism, he could not be simply labeled as such. He was devout and that was a fact that he never tried to hide. He struggled to define the role of Islam that he saw as an inseparable part of his own identity and the identity of his community and to reconcile it with secular modern democracy. He adamantly rejected on several occasions the formation of a national state for Muslims only, and publicly promulgated the vision of Bosnia as a citizen state. On the other hand he did, under the pressure of external and internal factors, accept the ethnic division of Bosnia. One of his closest associates, and later a prominent dissident from his government, Rusmir Mahmutcehajic accused him of in principle identical behaviour to Tudjman and Milosevic’s, and pointed to his act of acceptance of the division of Bosnia, as a final blow to the country. Under his rule the religion penetrated into institutions of the state as religious leaders became, as everywhere else, more influential. During this time the Bosnian Army became an army of the Muslim nation and an instrument in the hands of Izetbegovic’s party. Ramet rather proposes that Izetbegovic was a political opportunist, who had different speeches for different audiences, liberal for Western audiences and more religious for foreign Islamic donors. Yet, it has to be underlined that the responsibility of the main three actors for destruction of Bosnia is not the same. As in the case of Yugoslavia, the main architect was Milosevic, Tudjman was his partner, yet only a follower. Izetbegovic was a much more moderate politician than his counterparts, between whom he tried desperately to balance and avoid war until the last moment. See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p. 422-424. Also Mahmutcehajic, The Denial of Bosnia, p. 51-5., Rusmir Mahmutcehajic, Sarajevo Essays, Politics, Ideology, and Tradition, State University of New York Press, 2003, pp.69-70.
described as the continuation of the policy of the interwar Yugoslav Muslim Organization, led by Mehmed Spaho.\textsuperscript{94} It argued for the protection of Muslim interests within a federal Yugoslavia with significant autonomy for Bosnia. Yet, the party’s populist image and connections to some militant nationalists was too much for the left wing of the party that soon separated. Under the leadership of liberal intellectual Adil Zulfikarpasic - a self-made millionaire who spent many years abroad, who had founded the Bosnian Cultural Institute in Zurich - they formed a second major party whose members were predominantly Muslims, but its ranks were open to anyone based on the principles of liberal democracy. The SDA was a party for the Muslim masses; the MBO (\textit{Muslim Bosniak Organisation}) remained a party of a few nationally oriented intellectuals that failed to gain any significant popular support in the elections.

It is important to underline that before the elections, ethnic parties showed a significant degree of mutual tolerance, entering the election campaign on a promise of ethnic cooperation and respect for the multiethnic character of Bosnia and its sovereignty, never mentioning possible division or conflict. At the same time they staged massive rallies together, leaving the impression of cooperation while promising Switzerland’s living standards if elected. The message sent to their voters was benign: this “was not an indefinite division, but only a measure of ethnic groups - an ethnic census. In other words, they would lead them into a future with more rights, but ordinary life would remain more or less the same.”\textsuperscript{95} Yet, the only thing uniting them was a common enemy.

Under pressure of ethnic polarization from Serbia and Croatia, Bosnia’s fragile multicultural mix began to unravel. Previously rare ethnic incidents became more common. The ethnic parties begun to present themselves as exclusive protectors of their respective groups. Simultaneously, they were claiming that their ethnic groups were encroached upon - protection could be promised only under the condition of unquestioned ethnic homogenization, confirmed with a large amount of votes. This double game of imposing the division from above while presenting themselves as the only force that can secure the rights of its ethnic group, produced results. The democratic opposition of reformed Communists and Markovic’s Reformist party did not stand a

\textsuperscript{94} The party was originally to bear the same name as Spaho’s party, but initial ban on the formation of ethnic parties in Bosnia prevented it. On Yugoslav Muslim Organization see chapter 3 page 54.

\textsuperscript{95} Andjelic, \textit{Bosnia-Herzegovina, The End of a Legacy}, p.179.
chance. The election was in fact the ‘ethnic census’ in which the Communist party was humiliated by a crushing defeat.96

Once elected Croatian HDZ and Serb SDS, demonstrated astonishing levels of incompetence in ruling the state, and showed their true character by starting to follow the agenda of their respective regimes outside of Bosnia, neglecting the interests of Bosnia’s citizens. The Muslim SDA, equally inept - pressed in a sandwich between two more powerful parties - could only perform the delicate act of balance, positioning itself as a protector of the Muslim population only.97 Civil opposition, recently defeated, was weak, disunited and largely ignored. Despite the fact that they did not win the elections on a mandate of the division of Bosnia, let alone a war, the three ethnic parties pulled in three different directions.

SDS turned the areas it controlled into enclaves that started explicitly denying loyalty to the government in Sarajevo.98 By adopting the path of “policy of pre-emption”99 it achieved the double effect: a priori it rejected and therefore blocked

96 The Muslim parties won 41 percent of the vote, Serb 31 percent and 20 percent Croat, roughly matching the total percentage of population 44, 35, and 17 percent respectively. Yet as we argued above this was not by any means a mandate to dismember Bosnia. See Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, p.223.
97 By this time it was obvious that the political goals of these three parties were totally opposite and mutually exclusive. The SDS was Milosevic’s extended hand and argued for Bosnia within a strong, federal Yugoslavia. In the case of Bosnian separation from Yugoslavia, it demanded that Serb territories should secede from Bosnia and join Serbia. HDZ, following Zagreb policy, was arguing for a unified Bosnia in confederation with the rest of Yugoslavia, as long as Croatia stays with Yugoslavia. Since Muslims did not have a “spare fatherland” as Bosnian Serbs and Croats did, the SDA was naturally promoting Bosnia’s sovereignty and the concept of civil society. This was often met with sarcastic comments of the wider public, as a clear oxymoron - an ethnic party arguing for the state based on the rule of citizen - and was rather seen as the mask for their hidden project of Muslim domination in the future independent Bosnia. Yet, the party had hardly any options. Stuck between Milosevic and Tudjman, a choice vividly described by Izetbegovic as having to choose between leukemia and the brain tumor, it could only try to walk a delicate line of compromise and declare itself neutral in the Serbo-Croat war. See Andjelic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, The End of a Legacy, pp. 205-6.
98 In May of 1991 SDS formed Serbian National Council in the regional center of Banja Luka, which argued a secession of the Serb controlled parts of northwestern Bosnia and their unification with Serb controlled areas of Croatia. These parts were then exposed to heavy propaganda and armed in a clandestine way from Belgrade, following the same recipe as earlier in Croatia. In September of 1991 these areas were proclaimed as the Serbian Autonomous Region. This all confirmed that SDS was the executor of the wider plan commanded from Belgrade. See Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, p.224-5.
99 Thompson, Forging War, p.203.
Bosnia’s path towards independence, as well as prepared the Bosnian Serb population for a war, pushing them into homogenization and ultimately into conflict with the others.100

On October 15, 1991, the government in Sarajevo declared Bosnia as a sovereign republic, overruling Yugoslavian laws on its territory, and declaring itself neutral in the conflict between Serbia and Croatia. During the fiery debate in parliament Radovan Karadzic, a hard-core nationalist leader of the SDS, uttered an ominous slur, warning Muslims that voting to secede from Yugoslavia might lead them into a disappearance as a nation. His delegates then stormed the parliament, only to set up a separate Serb National Assembly. In January 1992 Republika Srpska (Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina) was proclaimed, again as a pre-emptive move. The state would stay put, and not proclaim its independence until March 27, after Bosnia proclaimed its independence from Yugoslavia, on March 3 1992.101

The Croat HDZ also set up two Autonomous Regions in Bosnia, which they claimed, were defensive moves to protect the Croat majority of those territories from Serb aggression because the government in Sarajevo did not possess armed forces and so it obviously could not exercise its sovereignty. In the beginning of the conflict, the HDZ did not deny legitimacy to the Sarajevo government as SDS, yet soon it became obvious

---

100 Although the endorsement of the SDS came under heavy propaganda, and before it showed any intention of breaking Bosnia, its dominance in the Serb Republic could not be challenged once the war started and when total homogenization of the population was achieved. Yet, many Serbs stayed ‘on the other side’ sharing the fate of their neighbours, and displaying their loyalty to the Bosnian government and Bosnian traditions. Many even actively participated in the Bosnian Army. At the start of the war Serbs and Croats made up 20 percent of the Bosnian Army while the general staff was 20 percent Croat and 12 percent Serb. At the end of the war this number was below 3 percent. See Hoare, The History of Bosnia, p. 367 and pp.387-392.

101 It has to be stressed that the formation of a separate unit and the establishment of practical - but not formal - independence was accompanied and secured with huge amounts of propaganda. This campaign of misinformation was aimed at presenting the situation in Bosnia as one in which Serbs were again, as in the WW II, facing an imminent danger from their neighbours, and that absolute homogenization and territorial division were the only way to secure their endangered rights. See Lovrenovic, Bosnia: A Cultural History, p. 195. War for control of media in Bosnia started as a war for transmitters. Before the outbreak of hostilities five main transmitters of TV Sarajevo were taken away by SDS activists with the help of the Army and redirected towards Belgrade. By the time of Bosnia’s international recognition on April 6.1992, half of its territory was covered by Serbian TV beaming from Belgrade. This increased to 70 percent with the beginning of the war, as three more transmitters were redirected. This was the most significant factor in preparation of Bosnian Serbs for war, as for more than six months before the outbreak of hostilities they were systematically brainwashed with the mix of misinformation and hate speech coming from Belgrade. See Thompson, Forging War, pp.207-9.
that its leader had no control over his party. In February 1992, by a decree from Zagreb, the moderate leader was replaced, with a hard-core nationalist from Western Herzegovina. That faction of the party was loyal to Tudjman’s government and his vision of a Greater Croatia that would divide Bosnia with Milosevic, and attach the Croat-populated Western Herzegovina to Croatia in the case of a war.

The Sarajevo government was utterly unprepared for war; unarmed and powerless it could not control its territory. As the six-month war in Croatia came to an end the Army withdrew to the Bosnian territory, practically occupying it. At the same time confused, surprised, and armed with an openly condescending attitude towards the ‘Balkan mess’ that it is being pulled into, the European Commission was faced with the fait accompli by the unilateral controversial decision of Germany and Austria to recognize Slovenia and Croatia. Having now recognized that Yugoslavia had dissolved, the European Commission brought a decision to recognize Macedonia and Slovenia immediately. Croatia would be recognized after the passage of laws that would guarantee human rights to Serbian minority. The European Commission prescribed a referendum as the way out of crisis for Bosnia.

102 The split in the Croatian ethnic body in Bosnia was running along the differences between two fractions in Bosnian Croat political discourse. One current among the Bosnian Croats adhered to the idea that the wider Croatian cultural identity and political loyalty to the Bosnian state were compatible and not mutually exclusive. This was the policy widely supported by Bosnian Croat intellectual circles, and it was resting on the policy of loyalty to the Bosnian state, whose most prominent carriers, for centuries, were Bosnian Franciscans. The intellectual elite formed the Croat National Council, who put a fierce resistance to Tudjman’s policies in Bosnia. His politics of population relocation and trade with territories was also rejected by the most of Bosnian Croat population of central and northern Bosnia, who were soon about to be sacrificed in the war with Bosnian Muslims. The other prevalent political discourse was that of the Croat population of Western Herzegovina. This part of Bosnia was one of the most ethnically homogeneous parts of the country and traditionally a breeding ground for Croatian nationalism. Territorially it always belonged to Bosnia, but its population was always displaying irredentist tendencies, seeing themselves as part of Croatia, and most true among all Croats. Ante Pavelic, a leader of the fascist NDH as well as many from his circle, was from Herzegovina. Labeled as a hot bed of Ustasha ideology the region was heavily repressed after the WW II, until the fall of Rankovic. Many extremists in Tudjman’s government also came from this area, as the so-called ‘Herzegovina lobby’ always played a prominent role in Croatian politics. As with Croatian Serbs and their relation to Belgrade, the tragic role of this community lays in the fact that it was always readily used by the national elite in Zagreb for achievement of their political goals, and then discarded regardless of consequences. Although ethnically homogeneous, Western Herzegovina contained only the one third of all Croats who lived in Bosnia. The rest lived intermixed with Serbs and Muslims in northern and central Bosnia. The moderate leader of HDZ, Stjepan Kljujić, was replaced, by the decree from Zagreb, with an extreme Croat from Western Herzegovina Mate Boban. See Hoare, The History of Bosnia, pp.383-7.

103 War in Croatia came to an end after the six months, with the cease-fire in which the Serbian-controlled Yugoslav Army withdrew from Croatia, while 14 000 UN soldiers were sent in to maintain peace on Serb occupied territories.
The referendum on independence was held on March 1, 1992 - and only 63 percent of the electorate voted. The SDS forbade voting to the Serbs on territories they controlled. Many Serbs living in the cities voted with their fellow compatriots, 99.4 percent of those who voted approved independence of the Bosnian state.104

A few days after when Karadzic’s forces set up the first roadblocks on the roads around Sarajevo, the united citizens in a spontaneous show of solidarity and unity swamped the streets of Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities. As stated before, even at the eve of this most brutal war, the population of the cities still clung to their common identity and the values of coexistence that united them. This was repeated a month afterwards, when the first incidents of ethnic cleansing against Bosnian Muslims, conducted by paramilitary units from Serbia, took place in town of Bijeljina, in northeastern Bosnia, on April 1. On April 6, the day of international recognition of Bosnia, a massive rally for peace took place in Sarajevo. A crowd was exposed to sniper fire from surrounding hills, marking the beginning of the overt aggression on Bosnia from Serb forces. This violence turned into the longest siege of a city in modern history, and the most terrible war in Europe after World War II. It also marked the beginning of the end of the centuries-old, unique Bosnian, multicultural experiment. Bosnian cities were still “living proof of multiethnic coexistence and multicultural civilization”105 and this urban, cosmopolitan culture of diversity was overthrown by force from outside.

At the Gates of Hell

For three years, in front of the whole world, the Serb forces held siege of Sarajevo, mercilessly killing civilians while the Army,106 with the help of paramilitaries, tried to conquer as much territory as possible and to ethnically cleanse it. In the Bosnian ethnic mix this was only made possible by massive expulsions of the non-Serb population

104 Hoare, The History of Bosnia, p.363.
105 Woodward, Balkan Tragedy, p.234.
106 The part of the Yugoslav People Army that remained in Bosnia changed its name into Army of Serb Republic, as Milosevic wanted to distance himself from the war in Bosnia. Despite the fact that soldiers were mostly drafted from the local Serb population, its command cadre was still on the payroll of Belgrade, depending on Milosevic for all necessary supplies and support.
while committing massive atrocities. Concentration camps were run where the population was exposed to humiliation, torture, mass rape and executions. These crimes were a premeditated effort to “cleanse” the territories from all others inhabiting them, thereby paving the way for a future Serbian nation state. They were also an attempt to erase centuries of Bosnian common cultural heritage, and especially any memory of common life so as to undermine any possibility for reconciliation after the war.

Tremendous damage was inflicted on the cultural heritage of Bosnia, as many priceless cultural monuments, mosques and churches were destroyed. The armies were filled with rural recruits who besieged and shelled Bosnian cities, displaying their hatred towards everything that these cultural sites stood for. Denitch argues:

“During the years I have lived and worked in Yugoslavia, it had seemed that a new, heterogeneous, popular culture was emerging among the young and among the urban workers. Multietnic Sarajevo was the major source of popular music and culture. The current wave of nationalism strikes me, as the revenge of provincial language and history teachers and all who insist that they must preserve that which is specific for their nation. The war in Bosnia is obviously also an urbicide -cities have been relentlessly bombed into shambles. This is the revenge of the local rednecks who have always hated the cities. The cities are where

107 Serb forces ran several concentration camps where the civil population was exposed to torture, humiliation and rape. Systematic expulsion of the non-Serb population was carried out, followed by massive atrocities, in many Bosnian cities and communities. At one point of the war the Serbs held 70 percent of Bosnian territory. The campaign of terror culminated with the genocidal crime in the town of Srebrenica where 8373 unarmed Muslim men and boys were slaughtered in the last days of the war. The population of Sarajevo was kept under siege for three years, and exposed to sniper fire and systematic shelling, deprived of food, water and electricity. The final toll of the siege of Sarajevo reached almost 11,000 victims, including 1,500 children, and 50,000 wounded. Hoare, The History of Bosnia, p.356. Also, Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.466.

108 This argument is not ignoring the fact that wars were prepared and organized by urban, well-traveled and educated political elites. The very first victim of siege and merciless shelling of Sarajevo was the National and University Library that was torched in the first days of the war, destroying 40 percent of its collection of books. Destruction of other invaluable buildings and institutions followed, such as the Oriental institute, the Olympic Museum and many other cultural artefacts and treasures of common Bosnian heritage. In the first six months of war more than seventy percent of the archives, libraries and places of worship were destroyed, mostly by Serb forces. In the rest of the territory under Serb control, the systematic destruction of religious buildings carried on even if they were outside the war zone. Some of them were invaluable historic mosques in Banja Luka and Foca, or Catholic monasteries and churches, as in Plehan and Jajce, to name just a few. The Croat forces destroyed several priceless cultural monuments in the famous medieval town of Pocitelj, and Mostar, the most famous of them the Orthodox monastery and the Old Bridge. See Lovrenovic, Bosnia, A Cultural History, p.208, Also Hoare, The History of Bosnia, p.356.
massive internmarriage and denationalization take place, where various national groups mix and make friends, where women enter professions, where the young reject tradition. They are seats of political authority and the source of modernity. The villagers have always hated and envied the cities, and this war permits the destruction of these dangerous places.”

Milosevic used the very same scenario that was used in Croatia to draw Bosnia into a war. Yet this time, he had a partner in crime. Aspiring for a ‘final solution’ to the Serbo-Croat question, the main tension that was burdening the existence of both Yugoslavias for seventy years, Milosevic and Tudjman got involved in a secret negotiation and an active partition of Bosnia. With their meeting in Karadjordjevo, in March 1991, the very existence of Bosnia came to be questioned.

Although the plan was never made public, there was plenty of evidence that leaked to conclude that the division of Bosnia was supposed to run along the lines of the Cvetkovic-Macek agreement, from 1939, in accordance with long standing territorial aspirations towards Bosnian territory from both sides. Calling Bosnia openly a “colonial creation” Tudjman, on more than one occasion publicly argued the division of Bosnia between Serbs and Croats was the only natural solution to both, the Serbian and Croatian national question. What would be left for Muslims was in accordance what Constantine Porphyrogeneitus described in the tenth century as the “little land of

110 On meeting in Karadjordjevo, Milos Minic, Dogovori u Karadjordjevu o podeli Bosne i Herzegovine, Rabis, Sarajevo, 1998, pp.21-103.
111 On Cvetkovic-Macek agreement see chapter 3, pages 59-60.
112 Both, Tudjman and Milosevic followed the same self-serving nationalistic logic that would switch between ethnic rights and historic rights of their respective nations whenever it suited them. While Milosevic wanted large parts of Croatian and Bosnian territory populated by Serbs for himself on the basis of ethnic rights, he denied the very same right to ethnic Albanians on Kosovo, this time stating Serb historic rights to that territory. While Tudjman demanded the secession of Bosnian Croats on the basis of ethnic rights, he denied the very same right to Croatian Serbs, and quoting Croatia’s historic state right rejected talk about the federalization of Croatia. Nevertheless, they were both united in disrespecting Bosnia’s borders and denying its right to existence.
Bosnia, a small Muslim state as a buffer zone between the Great Serbia and the Great Croatia.

On July 3, 1992, after the secret meeting between their Bosnian marionette-leaders, Karazic and Boban, in Vienna, the Croatian Republic of Herzeg Bosna was proclaimed. Denying the legitimacy of the Bosnian government, HDZ withdrew from the work of state organs and openly attacked Bosnian Muslims in order to carve out the territories they had presumed belonged to them. Local Croatian paramilitaries, often collaborating with yesterday’s sworn enemy and today’s ‘brothers in Christ’, attacked Muslim forces in Central Bosnia. Again, carving territories from Bosnia could be achieved only by massive terror against the civil population and its relocation.

This is the moment where the responsibility of the third ethnic party for the destruction of Bosnia comes into a play. Faced with open aggression on the territory of Bosnia, with the massive campaign of ethnic cleansing - bordering with the drive for their extermination happening in front of an indifferent West – the Bosnian Muslim leadership opted for the creation of their own nation state. At this time the Bosnian government became more mono-national and started stressing its religious orientation. The Bosnian Army slowly became the army of one nation only.

113 See chapter 2, page 16.
115 The large number of Croatian intellectuals and politicians in Bosnia and Croatia attacked Tudjman, while some prominent members of his government including the future president of Croatia, Stipe Mesic, left his party over the decision to get Croatia directly involved into a partition of Bosnia. The HVO (army of the Bosnian Croats), with direct support of the Croatian Army attacked Bosnian Muslims with the goal of carving up as much territory as possible for themselves. There were about 30 000 Croatian troops on Bosnian soil, the fact that was often overlooked by international community for several reasons. Croatia itself enjoyed the status of a victim of Serbian aggression, and Croat forces did not have time to commit as much destruction, as their Serbian counterparts. Tudjman was soon forced to listen to his Western sponsors. This resulted in a so-called “Washington agreement” in March of 1994, which put an end to the Croat-Muslim War and opened the door to their military cooperation. Nevertheless, the one-year war resulted in many atrocities against the civil population, especially in central Bosnia, most notably in the villages of Ahmici and Stupni Do, brutal expulsions of population as in Capljina and Stolac, and culminated in the near total destruction of the city of Mostar. Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, pp.435-8.
116 This especially became visible as various mujahedin volunteers, arriving from various Islamic countries to defend Bosnian Muslims, in what they saw as a holy war, were incorporated into the Bosnian Army. See Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.435.
117 This process coincided with efforts of the international community to end the war and their proposal, the so-called “Wance-Owen Plan”, to end the conflict. The plan favored the division of Bosnia along ethnic lines and allocated disproportionately a larger share of Bosnian territory to Serbs (43%) and Croats (25%) while leaving the Muslims with only 25% of territory. It was after this plan was presented that Bosnian
At the beginning, the war in Bosnia could have been characterized as an aggression from Serbia, with the involvement from Croatia. However, after the radicalization of the forces of the Bosnian Muslims, the conflict took another tragic turn and turned into a civil war of all against all, culminating in the inter-factional Muslim war in northwestern Bosnia. Bosnian Muslims adopted the name *Bosniak* in order to distinguish between their religious and national identity but also to stress their connection to Bosnian statehood.\(^{118}\) Having to fight for their lives, in order to break the total blockade now imposed from the other two sides, they also committed many crimes against the Croat and Serb civil population in Bosnia. Yet it has to be stressed that Bosniaks never embraced the policy of ethnic cleansing nor the level of terror towards the civilian population and destruction of sacral and cultural objects achieved by Croatia and to a much greater degree Serbian forces.\(^{119}\)

The bloody wars in Croatia and Bosnia were very much wars against civilians on all sides. As the total destruction of Vukovar in the Croatian war, the absurd siege of Sarajevo and destruction of Mostar in the Bosnian war did not have solely military

---

\(^{118}\) The name *Bosniak* would therefore regard only to Bosnian Muslims while wider term *Bosnian* would cover all three Bosnian nations. From now on, accordingly, I will start using the term Bosniak to refer to Bosnian Muslims.

\(^{119}\) The Bosnian Army was forged in the war and was a relatively decentralized force. Bosnian forces in Visoko, Srebrenica and Konjic committed major crimes against the Serbian civil population. Paramilitary formations in Sarajevo targeted civil Serbian populations during the siege of Sarajevo, but they were put under control during 1993. Major crimes were committed against the Croat population in central Bosnia especially in Bugojno, Fojnica, Kakanj and Vares. See Hoare, *The History of Bosnia*, p.383.
objectives either. It rather sought to prove the impossibility of life together and to destroy any chances for a multiethnic Bosnia in the future: “In nationalist war military objectives were driven by a desire to hurt, humiliate and punish.”

People put up as much resistance to the war and the madness of nationalism as they could. Many Serbs, Croats, and later Bosniaks, showed a great deal of solidarity refusing to fight their neighbours and for that many paid with their lives. A number of intellectuals, writers, and journalists put up fierce resistance to nationalistic regimes and the ideology of war, often putting everything they had on the line. Yet they were a minority facing an overwhelming power of governments working towards the common goal of carving out their national states and erasing the memory of a common life and cultural tolerance.

The levees of the Yugoslavian fragile identity and democracy were too weak to resist the overwhelming tides of nationalistic madness. Still, it is important to underline that it was only when political elites began reinterpreting the past to allow them to cling to power, ethnicity became people’s destiny. The massive propaganda and systematic effort by the state, awakened old fears and prejudices, induced hatred, and produced ethnic homogenization leading inevitably into conflict. The war that followed destroyed everything in its path and sucked into its vortex even those individuals who resisted it. Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulic summarizes this frenzy of violence in the name of all Yugoslavs:

“I was pinned to the wall of nationhood - not only by outside pressure from Serbia and the Federal Army but by national homogenization within Croatia itself. This is what the war is doing to us, reducing us to a one dimension: the Nation. The trouble with this nationhood, however, is that whereas before, I was defined by my education, my job, my ideas, my character - and yes, my nationality too - now I feel stripped of all that. I am nobody because I am not a person any more. I am one of 4.5 million Croats…. Just as in the days of brotherhood and unity, there is now another ideology holding people together, the ideology of nationhood. What has happened is that something people cherished as a part of their cultural identity - an alternative to all embracing communism, a means to survive - has

---

120 Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging*, p.45.
become their political identity and turned into something like an ill-fitting shirt. But there is no escape; there is nothing else to wear. One doesn’t have to succumb voluntarily to this ideology of the nation - one is sucked into it.”

As we can see from this chapter the events initiated with the decisive turn of the Yugoslav political ship towards further decentralization along the one party federalism in the early eighties, led to the transformation of the republics and provinces into full-fledged sovereign states. Having opposing interests and unable to find a common ground, or to negotiate a settlement that would bring political stability and return economic prosperity to citizens of Yugoslavia, they pursued their own goals, gradually draining the federal center of any power. In the forefront of this process were the national elites of Slovenia and Serbia, the former looking to leave Yugoslavia and the later to re-establish a firm central state in which their interests would be paramount.

In the conditions of a disintegrating federal state, unraveling at its economic, political and social seams, nationalism proved to be a useful but dangerous tool in the arms of national elites. Its choice as the weapon of preference was facilitated by the unresolved national question and the absence of a civil society in the monist Communist Yugoslavia. The massive movement of national homogenization produced in the late eighties by the Serbian intellectual and political elite, attacked the very foundations of the Yugoslavian state, inevitably putting them on the path of collision with both the federal state apparatus and with other ethnic groups.

Nationalism was used as a political instrument of the national elites. It was created and imposed from above, and using state power distributed through all avenues of social life. The principle of national self-determination was claimed by all sides to create separate nation states. As the different claims over the multietnic tapestry of Yugoslavia and especially Bosnia proved irreconcilable, they could be solved only by a war. Therefore, the war that followed was not an aftermath of ancient hatred among the people

121 Drakulic, *Balkan Express*, p.52.
of Yugoslavia, but rather a war between political elites and their opposing political concepts.

Once again an ill-adapted concept of a nation state, promulgated by national elites and condoned by the West despite their rhetoric of human rights and multiculturalism, proved deadly in the Balkan multiethnic mix. Yugoslav society disintegrated in an immense tragedy for its civil population and in this process the final assault on the cultural identities of people was launched. Under the pressure of war, amid the unspeakable crimes, relentless propaganda and appalling destruction, those identities would mutate and shatter as the country would itself. Only one thing was certain, the people who survived the tragedy of the second fratricidal war in fifty years were not the same people who were pushed into it by their reckless politicians.
Chapter Six
Instead of Epilogue
1995-2010

The break up of Yugoslavia was a political and social earthquake of enormous proportions. Seven different states have emerged from the ashes of a common house in less than two decades that followed the outbreak of war. As previously argued ethnic homogenization was a critical step in order to push people who lived as neighbours for centuries to turn against each other with unimaginable brutality. Following the war these identities had to be reconstructed in a way to facilitate the establishment of loyalty to the new states. The national intelligentsia of all successor states attempted to give a meaning to these changes - to explain and justify the events that had occurred - to produce a new sense of belonging and to ascribe a new cultural identity to its constituency. This was most often done by the reinvention of the past, by denying the similarities and underlining the difference against the ‘Other’, with whom they shared not only everyday life in the same political community for the past seventy years, but also many traits and deeper cultural ties. By continuing to manipulate the phenomenon of ethnicity, the political elites managed to “normalize” the nationalistic discourse and disperse it into all realms of social life through the institution of state, school, church and media. As a result the complex identities were narrowed down to separate identities that started to diverge from each other.

War for a Memory

After four wars, innumerable victims, and appalling material destruction seven new states emerged as the successors of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav project finished full

---

1 As discussed in last chapter Slovenia and Croatia proclaimed their independence in 1991, to be recognized by January of the next year. They were followed by Macedonia in September of 1991, which attained independence without a war. Bosnia was recognized in April of 1992, but international recognition only marked the beginning of the four years war. At the same time the leaderships of Montenegro and Serbia proclaimed their will to form a Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It was a rump state claiming a legal succession of Tito’s Yugoslavia in order to legalize Milosevic’s war efforts in a creation of the Great
circle and ended up on the ‘junkyard of history’ together with the other state formations in which South Slavs had lived in the past, with no prospect of returning any time soon. The process of normalization of relations, of mending severed ties, and re-establishing minimum cooperation between separated parts remains an uneasy and difficult task.

As argued in this study, the wars were waged not only for territory, but also, among other things, to undermine and destroy the loyalty to Yugoslavia as a common home and to secure loyalty to the new nation states. With the demise of Yugoslavia one set of values and identities was dissolved as another one slowly congealed and replaced the old one. The public space was contaminated for years with hate speech, and nationalism permeated all spheres of social life. The war left behind ravaged economies, widespread crime, corruption, poverty, and unemployment. The war completely destroyed the social system. Against such a background, the process of normalization, reconciliation and rebuilding the institutions of the democratic system faced extreme difficulties.

__Serbia. It only succeeded to further compromise the name of the former state. The two sides were supposed to be equal in the new state, but in practice the legal framework secured the domination of Serbia over Montenegro. The state was also a mask for Milosevic’s absolute grip on power, secured with a huge police apparatus and his absolute control over financial institutions. Although Milosevic formally distanced himself from the war in Bosnia, the international community, always reluctant to engage decisively in the Bosnian tragedy, imposed economic sanctions on Serbia. The sanctions crippled Serbia’s economy and impoverished its population, while at the same time enabling Milosevic and his cronies to become extremely rich by profiting from involvement in crime, corruption, smuggling of gas, arms, cigarettes and drugs and siphoning large amounts of money to off-shore accounts. Milosevic’s criminal regime could survive only by producing one crisis after another. Finally running out of options, as the conclusion of wars in Bosnia and Croatia in 1995 put an end to the project of Great Serbia, Milosevic tried once again to mobilize his constituency by pushing it into conflict with the Albanian majority in Kosovo. The policy of ethnic cleansing was employed again as it had proven successful in Bosnia. The looming refugee crisis and the concerns over another large-scale war that had the potential of escalating into a regional conflict finally triggered the response of the always-late International community. In March of 1999, NATO began a controversial campaign of the bombardment of Serbia that lasted for 78 straight days, while the Serbian Army and Albanian paramilitaries waged a battle on ground. On June 9, the Serb Army capitulated and NATO established protectorate over Kosovo. Milosevic, “a master of consuming and reproducing chaos” (as properly named by his former political mentor Stambolic whom he had ordered to be killed in 2000) lost his grip on power after another unsuccessful attempt to steal the election results in Serbia in 2000. Massive demonstrations and street protest brought Serbia to a halt. He was finally ousted from power on October 5, 2000. In May of 1999, the International community had already indicted him on war crimes against humanity. In June of 2001, under pressure from the West, the new government led by Zoran Djindjic, extradited Milosevic to the International War Tribunal in Hague. Meanwhile, the already alienated leadership of Montenegro moved their country towards independence, which was finally achieved after the referendum in June of 2006. On February of 2008 Kosovo proclaimed its independence and, after controversial recognition by the USA and most of its major European allies, started a life as the seventh independent state to emerge form the ashes of Yugoslavia.

2 Udovicki, “Conclusion”, in Udovicki & Ridgeway, _Burn This House_, p.304.
The real war was stopped; the guns were silenced; yet the battleground was moved to the realm of memory and replacement of identity. The war had opened many new wounds. Instead of putting an effort to confront their past in an objective way, the political elites of the new national states, often controlled by undefeated nationalistic forces, were adhering to historical revisionism, future mythologization and a one-sided interpretation of the past. The distinctive language of “blood and soil”, exclusion of the ‘Other’, division and hate, together with the process of underlining differences and rewriting history has proven to be more reliable social glue than the institutions of the weak democracy. The final goal is to finish the creation of ethnically clean nation states, which only indicates that political elites are not giving up on this political concept despite the disastrous consequences it has already produced.

Ugresic argues that the war was waged not only for territory but also for memory and monopoly of the interpretation of the past:

“What is being annihilated with grenades, murders, rape, the displacement of the peoples, ethnic cleansing, the new ideology supported by the media, is memory. What is being built on the ruins is the new truth, the one that one day will be the only memory. In that sense, the war on the territory of former Yugoslavia is only a repetition of the old story of disappearance and appearance, the story of human civilization.”

---

**Bosnia Divided**

Similar to other former Eastern block countries, all of the states succeeding Yugoslavia were burdened with the struggle of transforming their political and economic systems to the Western model (a process often referred to with common name of *Transition*). Some states are faring very well, as in the case of Slovenia, the richest new member of the EU, while others, after initial difficulties have established themselves as peaceful but struggling democracies like Macedonia or Montenegro.

---

3 Ugresic, *The Culture of Lies*, p.70.
Out of the three most important actors in our drama, Serbia has had the most dramatic transfer to democracy. After the fall of Milosevic the country was quickly reintegrated in the international institutions it was expelled from during his reign. The relations with the neighboring countries and other former Yugoslav republics are somewhat normalized as the new government showed its intention to join wider European integrations.

Milosevic’s legacy left Serbia in political, economic and moral ruin. Its economy remains still in shambles, and poverty and corruption are widespread. The country remains the slave of the parochial, nationalistic ideology that reigned for now almost a quarter of a century. Weak democratic forces are meeting many obstacles in their efforts to rebuild a civil society.  

Although Serbia showed an effort in cooperation with the International Tribunal in Hague and arrested and extradited almost all of the accused for war crimes, its political and national elites and wider Serbian public are still avoiding facing their past and opening a dialogue about the role that Serbia has played in the destruction of Yugoslavia.

The feeling of self-pity remains prevalent, as most of the population still see themselves as the victims of a worldwide conspiracy against their nation. The old practice of glorifying their own nation while fostering intolerance towards others - and blaming them for historical trauma - is a universal Balkan malady, yet still most present in Serbia. The most dangerous legacy of the recent past is the nationalist culture, where nationalism has penetrated every pore of social life and is still happily employed by political elites in public discourse whenever needed. Chetniks and Partisans are not only reconciled in political and public discourse in Serbia but also in rights and in history textbooks

---

4 Democratic forces in Serbia suffered a major setback with the assassination of the pro-Western liberal democrat Premier Zoran Djindjic, in March of 2002. He had tried to tie the fate of Serbia closer to the West and to dismantle the major legacy of the Milosevic regime at home by confronting organized crime and the extensive net of state corruption. Ramet, The Three Yugoslavias, p.527.

5 In the late 2004, the Kostunica’s government had rehabilitated the Mihajlovic’s Ravna Gora Chetnik movement and presented it in an exclusive light of anti-fascist struggle. The law was passed in Serbian parliament. Former Chetniks are now equal in rights and merits with former Partisans, including the right to war pensions. Massive crimes committed towards the Muslims and Croats, as well as the Serbs who did not subscribe to their ideology, were simply ignored. The rehabilitation of Chetnik ideology resulted in the erection of monuments to Mihajlovic all over the country and commemoration of the memory of this movement in religious services and popular memory. Following Serbia, the Serb Republic of Bosnia passed the law with which it equated the Chetnik movement with anti-fascist forces. Serbia’s parliament recently failed to pass the law banning fascist organizations. Instead, the present government designated as its
exposing Serbian children to dangerous historical revisionism. Such relativization of war crimes from WW II and the latest Yugoslav war remains a concern, as it can only further contribute to feelings of victimization and intolerance towards others.  

Although verbally committed to principles of democracy Serbia remains a deeply divided society between weak liberal democratic forces who see the future of Serbia within the European Union, and remains of the old Milosevic system, nationalistic elite and the Church, that still have not given up on the idea of a Great Serbia. This nationalistic discourse, heated up by the recent controversial recognition of Kosovo as an independent state, by part of the International community, remains the most serious obstacle to the survival of Bosnia.  

priority finding the unmarked grave of Chetnik leader Draza Mihajlovic, executed by the communist government in 1946. Portraying fascism and communism as two equal totalitarian ideologies, Serbia is moving away from its anti-fascist past. A very similar movement may be noticed in Croatia where the fascist Ustasha movement is recently being equated with Croatian nationalism rather than with fascism. This brutal revision of past using subtle nuances in which fascism is being slowly normalized and the crimes perpetrated by fascist forces relativized, while crimes committed by the former communist regime are emphasized, is serving the production of the new truth and new tradition Nastasja Radovic, “Cetnicki zakon”, Republika, broj 348-349, Januar 2005, www.republika.co.rs, retrieved on April 20.2010. Dubravka Stojanovic “Changing History”, www.pescanik.net, retrieved on May 16.2010. Viktor Ivancic “Robovi grobova”, www.e-novine.com retrieved on January 1. 2010.  

Accountability for war crimes remains the most important issue in the region. Serbia extradited almost all from the list of war criminals to the International Court in Hague; yet, the region’s most wanted war criminal Ratko Mladic (responsible for the destruction of numerous Croatian and Bosnian cities and the massacre of Srebrenica) is still at large. Even more dangerous is the situation in public discourse, maintained by some media, in which perpetrated crimes are constantly being relativized. Serbia’s moderate president Boris Tadic has apologized for the crimes committed by “some individuals on behalf of Serbian people” already in 2004, and visited commemoration for the victims of Srebrenica massacre in 2005. Serbia’s parliament has recently adopted a declaration with which it publicly condemns the massacre of Srebrenica. This is certainly a step forward in facing the past, considering the fact that only a few years back there was almost the united denial of the fact that the massacre even happened. Yet, sincerity of the apology is openly questioned not only by the fact that Mladic remains free, but also by the omission of the word genocide in the resolution, as well as almost immediate relativization of the crime. The same document right after the apology invites others to condemn the crimes they have perpetrated against the Serbs. While Tadic certainly cannot be equated with the old politics of Belgrade, his behaviour is often sending mixed messages, as his effort to appease nationalistic forces in Serbia’s society cannot be ignored. It rather promotes politics of relativization of the responsibility for the war crimes, while arguing that true reconciliation in the region is possible only on the basis of equalization of the war guilt on all participants. Ian Bancroft, “The Dynamics of Apology and Forgiveness in the Balkans”, Radio Free Europe, www.rferl.org retrieved on May 17.2010. Also Ivan Todorov “Bosanska krcma”, www.pescanik.com retrieved on April 25.2010.  

After the, already mentioned, brief war between NATO and Serbia, Kosovo was put under UN protection. Serbia practically lost all of its sovereignty over the province in 1999, as it was ordered to withdraw its forces while the Albanian community was allowed to build a state administration under the patronage of the International community. Still Kosovo’s legal status remained unclear. The UN Security Council resolution left Serbia without effective control over Kosovo, yet paradoxically, with its resolution, reaffirmed Serbia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and called for a political solution between Serbia and the Albanian Community. Ten years have passed by without producing any political solution. While Serbia
Croatia remains in a somewhat better position than Serbia and especially Bosnia. Tudjman’s death in 1999, after almost ten years in power, enabled his political successors to reverse many of his policies and turn Croatia back on the path of European integration. Some of Tudjman’s policies - although discredited and publicly abandoned - are not yet fully eradicated. Putting the genie of nationalism back into the bottle is proving to be a hard task. The battle between the liberal and conservative forces in Croatian society is not over, but it seems that the former are stronger than the latter. Yet, every so often, the Croatian conservatives remind their constituency that being a Croat is the most valuable political currency.

The treatment of its Serb minority remains one of the biggest obstacles and probably one of the main reasons why Croatia is still lagging behind in European integrations. Despite all promises given to the International community the Croatian government is still dragging its feet when pressed to ensure that all conditions for the return of refugees are met. The real numbers of those returned are unknown, and the number of Serbs that live within the Croatia’s borders is likewise unknown. The Serbs were for a long time after the war a significant cultural ‘Other’ in public discourse. Many would not offer anything but wide autonomy, the Albanian side would not accept anything short of practical independence. This created an irreversible situation in which Serbian rule over Kosovo would be not possible without a violent opposition. In 2009 the USA, led by the George W. Bush administration, decided to break the deadlock and back Kosovo’s declaration of independence, arguing that the deadlock was challenging peace in the whole region. While this decision was backed by USA’s major western allies it was openly challenged by the other members of the UN Security Council, Russia and China, who are vetoing any acceptance of the new state to the International community. They are underlining the collision between this decision and the legal norms of the International law, by which the sovereignty of the country cannot be violated by unilateral declaration of independence and arguing that his dangerous precedent is undermining the whole system of international relations developed over the last several decades. The decision remains highly legally controversial as the International community used for the first time argument of human rights to override the rule of state sovereignty. Obviously aware of the weakness of its legal arguments and its potential to destabilize an International order, the USA and its allies stated the uniqueness of Kosovo’s case. Kosovo is recognized now by 68 out of 192 of the world’s countries (22 out of 27 European countries). Serbia started the legal process with the International court of Justice, asking for legal advice in question and reversal of the decision. Yet many Serbian politicians, despite of heated public rhetoric, because of prominent place Kosovo takes in Serbian mythology, privately convey the acceptance of this solution and see process as irreversible, seeing the Albanian overwhelming demographic presence as an ultimate threat to Serbia. They are rather hoping for some sort of solution that would result in the division of territory. Yet the sword of Kosovo hangs over Bosnia, as many in Serbia and the Serb Republic argue that if secession is allowed to Kosovo, than it should be allowed on the very same basis to the Serb Republic of Bosnia. The Serb Republic in February of 2008 adopted a resolution by which it blocked Bosnian recognition of Kosovo, arguing that full International recognition should be used as a legal precedent to allow referendum on its own secession from Bosnia. Many nationalists see this as the compensation to Serbia for the loss of Kosovo.
people faced with the choice between being ostracized and burdened with collective guilt for war and destruction in Croatia, and normal life, simply opted to blend themselves in their surroundings and disappear from the radar of ethnicity altogether by declaring themselves as Croats.\(^8\)

Revision of history continued after the war, proving that Serbia is not the only society unable to face its recent past in the objective light.\(^9\) By declaring recent so-called *Domovinski rat* (*Homeland war*) as an exclusively defensive war, Croatia’s political elites and public are avoiding facing the facts about the crimes committed against the civil Serb population, and the aggression in Bosnia.\(^10\)

---

\(^8\) The last census estimated the number of Serbs living in Croatia to only 4.5 percent of the total population, a decrease from pre-war 12 percent. It is estimated that the real figure is somewhat bigger as many simply failed to declare themselves nationally. See Ramet, *Three Yugoslavias*, p.589. Human Rights Watch reports in 2008 that Croatia has made modest improvements in human rights, but it still has to tackle the issue of the return and reintegration of its Serb minority. Although personal violence against returnees declined, there is a significant amount of intimidation and difficulties in repossessing property. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is estimating that only 55 000 Serbs, out of 200 000 that have fled in 1995, have returned permanently to Croatia. Impunity for the war crimes, especially against the Serb minority remains a problem. Illustrative is the case of Branimir Glavas, a high-ranking Croatian politician, member of the parliament and former general of the Croatian Army, who was after a long delay prosecuted by the Croatian court for the war crimes perpetrated against Serb civilians in city of Osijek. Upon his sentencing he simply got into the car and drove into Western Herzegovina (part of Bosnia under Croat control), where he now lives as a free man and a naturalized Bosnian citizen. The formal demand for his extradition was denied on the grounds that Bosnia does not have provision in law that enables extradition of its citizens. This obvious mockery of justice is illustrative of many similar cases and remains as an obstacle for prosecuting war criminals. *Human Rights Watch Report*, www.hrw.org, retrieved on April 24.2010. Also, *Report for European Commission Enlargement*, www.ec.europa.eu/enlargement retrieved on April 26.2010. Also Ivancic “*Robovi grobova*”, retrieved on January 1.2010.

\(^9\) Inspite of the fact that the Croatian government officially embraced antifascism as the official legacy on which the Croatian state is built, and the President and Partisan veteran Stipe Mesic remained a vocal defender of Croatian anti-fascist tradition, as late as 2004 seventeen cities across Croatia still had streets named after Mile Budak. Named “the Croatian Goebbels”, he was fascist NDH’s minister of education and religious affairs, and one of the main designers of the genocide against Serbs in Croatia during WW II. There is also a serious attempt to push into oblivion and relativize crimes of genocide committed by the Ustasha regime in WW II, if not anymore by active participation of the authorities, then by a tacit approval of some of the conservative forces in the ruling elite and the Church. Memory to the movement is often glorified at some concerts and gatherings to mark the anniversaries of the Bleiburg massacre (still financed by the state budget and still attended by the lower rank state officials), and so on. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, p.586. Also, Boris Dezulovic “*I ovce i Jasenovce, sudská dozvola za zaborav*”, www.e-novine.com, retrieved on May 22.2010.

\(^10\) Facing the fact about the crimes committed against the civil Serb population as well as the fact that Croatia had participated actively in the partition of Bosnia is still ignored by many. Particularly illustrative is the example of the new Croatian president Ivo Josipovic, a liberal democrat, who during the recent visit to Bosnia visited the place where one of the most tragic massacres of the last war committed by the Croat forces had taken a place. There he had officially apologized for crimes committed by Croatian paramilitaries against Bosniaks and publicly condemned Tudjman’s politics of the division of Bosnia from the end of the nineties. He offered his unconditional apologies to the families of the victims, calling on everyone in the region to start a process of reconciliation and peace building. This remarkable gesture, so
Still the most complicated and perilous situation remains in Bosnia, which remains a deeply divided society with an uncertain future. The war in Bosnia was stopped with the *Dayton Peace Accord* in 1995, brokered by the United States and guaranteed by the military muscle of NATO. While the agreement was successful in stopping further deaths and destruction, it provided Bosnia with a schizophrenic constitutional frame that has prevented the real integration of its constitutive parts and its nations and has failed to produce a secure environment in which democratic reform of the society can be achieved. Bosnia, as a state, often described as “too strong to die and too weak to live”, survives on life-support by the International community, as a non-functioning semi-protectorate whose very existence remains in question.\(^\text{11}\)

The Dayton Agreement practically - and politically - legalized the policy of ethnic cleansing especially in the Serb Republic where the Serbs constitute the absolute majority on the territory from which they had driven everyone else.\(^\text{12}\)

---

11 The Dayton Peace Agreement installed complex, expensive and above all inefficient political system. The agreement stipulates that Bosnia should be composed of two entities and three constitutive nations. The Serb entity, so-called *Republika Srpska* (hereafter, the *Serb Republic*) was assigned 49 percent of the total territory of Bosnia. The *Bosniak-Croat Federation* (hereafter, *Federation*) holds 51 percent of the territory. While the Serb Republic is a centralized unit, the Federation is composed of ten units, so-called *cantons*. Each canton has its own government and its own administration, which makes Bosnia not only a highly decentralized country but results in perhaps the largest bureaucratic system for the country of that size. Over 700 state officials and more than 140 ministers are siphoning more than 60 percent of the state budget. Bosnia as a state is extremely weak and practically has no state prerogatives. The Dayton Agreement also instituted the *Office of High Representative* of International Community for Bosnia. He is a highest authority in the country, a supreme arbiter in quarrels between its constitutional parts and the reminder of Bosnia’s status of semi-protectorate. Despite his powers to nullify decisions of the parliaments of two entities, discharge its officials or impose special laws, those powers are used seldom and only in extreme cases. The international community rather opted for a useless policy of appeasing and motivating ethnic political elites to break the political deadlock and find a compromise that would secure necessary constitutional changes that would move the country towards European integrations and NATO membership. “The Dayton Peace Accords on Bosnia” library of Bosnian Institute, www.bosnia.org, retrieved on April 2 2010.

12 On the territory of today’s Serb Republic by the last census conducted before the war in 1991 Serbs were only 55.4% of the total population. Bosniaks were 28.1%, Croats 9.2% and others (including the category of Yugoslavs) 7.3% of the population. As a consequence of ethnic cleansing, just after the end of war, in 1996, Serbs were 96.8% of the population of Serb Republic. In 2006, despite of the limited return of the pre-war population, Serbs were still the absolute majority with 88% of the population. Bosniaks make 8% of the population; Croats 4% while category of Others disappeared altogether. This homogenization is not
supposed to be a future guarantor of Bosnia’s ‘new’ post-war multiculturalism rather proves as an uneasy marriage between Croats and Bosniaks in which both sides are trying to leave. The Croats have established themselves as a majority in the two cantons in Western Herzegovina and one in Posavina, while Bosniaks dominate the rest of the Federation.

Kasapovic argues that this is a huge historical change in the way the Bosnian state is organized as the Dayton Accord has legalized the policy of ethnic territorialization. For the first time in the history of Bosnia the three groups are established as dominant in certain parts of the territory on which they are in the process of building their national institutions, changing in the most profound way political, social and psychological factors for organizing the Bosnian state and society.13

As a product of that, in spite of political pluralism after the war, multiple elections and the effort of the International community to inspire the electorate to move away from the pattern of ethnic voting, the nationalistic parties still dominate the political discourse of the country. It is not only the aftermath of the convoluted institutional frame and the fresh memories of a terrible war that enables political elites to bank on the “equilibrium of fear” to further manipulate their constituency to remain in power. It is also a deep social change that occurred within Bosnian society. Massive impoverishment of Bosnia’s population, departure of its urban middle class to the West, ruralization and ethnic homogenization of the cities and the close ties between organized crime and nationalistic political elites as a hallmark of the wild Bosnian transitional capitalism, are factors facilitating the existence of an ethnic democracy. Bosnia remains the hostage of three mutually hostile national elites, while integrative anti-nationalistic liberal forces remain weak and unable to capture the attention of the deranged Bosnian voter who resides in a political madhouse.

The largest obstacle to peace and stability remains Bosnia’s unsolved political question. The new Bosnian state remains highly dysfunctional and the governing ethnic

---

political elites and neighbouring countries constantly maintain tendency towards division of its territory and renewal of conflict.

The Serb Republic is constantly undermining any effort to strengthen Bosnia’s federal institutions, as well as any sense of belonging to Bosnia as a political unit or cultural project. Instead, it is openly promulgating the idea of its succession from Bosnia and joining Serbia. This idea is unattainable for now mostly because of the pressure by the International community. Aware of this fact, the government of the Serb Republic is practicing the strategy of “creeping secession” in which Bosnia’s existence is continually undermined. While the International community is defied daily, the Serb Republic is silently integrated, economically and culturally, with Serbia.14

The Croat political discourse remains divided, as discussed in the previous chapter. The weaker current from central Bosnia supports Bosnian unity, but more influential current form Western Herzegovina, which remains close to some conservative circles in Croatian politics, is arguing for its own ethnic entity that would have special connections to Croatia.15 The two cantons of Western Herzegovina, with absolute Croat ethnic majority, are already functioning as a part of Croatia. On their territory they use Croatian currency, fly the Croatian flag, and its population has Croatian passports and votes in Croatian elections on regular basis.

14 Bosnia is kept all the time on the verge of dissolution. Both Serbia and Croatia have responsibility for their respective ethnic Diasporas in their constitutions. Yet while the Croatian government sends money through Bosnia’s government institutions, Serbia invests directly on the territory of the Serb republic. For example Serbian moderate president Tadic has recently opened a school in a suburb of Sarajevo (Pale) named ‘Serbia’, financed directly from the Serbian state budget. Despite Tadic’s verbal commitment to Bosnia’s sovereignty and unity, Serbia’s officials are often sending a different message home. The Serb Republic - whose leaders commonly promote the impossibility of life with the other two nations, downplay the war crimes committed against them and often stir ethnic tensions - enjoys the full backing of Serbian political elites. Despite being verbally committed to Bosnia’s integrity, and pledging that Serbia would never support the referendum that would lead to the partition of Bosnia, Serbia’s policies are often working against it. There are many in Serbia that argue that the Serb Republic should be allowed to join Serbia to compensate it for the loss of Kosovo. Mathew Parish, “Republika Srpska: After Independence”, www.balkaninsight.com retrieved on May 10. 2010. Also Dragan Stavljanin “The Fragile Balkans”, www.rferl.org, retrieved on May 12.2010.

15 The Bosnian HDZ party that supports the second option remains burdened with internal clashes and recently by the winds of change coming from official Zagreb. The policy of respecting of Bosnian sovereignty seems to be not only the result of pressure from the International community but also a genuine reversal of Tudjman’s policies by the new political elite that prevailed in Croatia led by president Mesic and most recently Josipovic. They both send unambiguous messages to Bosnian and Hercegovian Croats that they should pledge their political loyalty to the government in Sarajevo Nevertheless the political circles from Western Herzegovina that deny Bosnian sovereignty remain an influential political lobby in Croatian politics and in the policy of the Croatian Catholic Church and are not yet defeated.
Croats are locked in Federation with more numerous and influential Bosniaks, who understandably have a more intensive emotional connection to Bosnia and the most interest to keep the country as a whole. Nevertheless, by insisting on their status of the “basic” Bosnian nation and on the constitutional changes that would secure the formation of a centralized state, based on the principle of a one-man one-vote, they often prove insensitive to the demands of the other two groups. In an ironical reversal of historic roles, Bosniaks often resemble a pre-war Serb emotional identification with Yugoslavia. In their quest for a centralized and strong Bosnia they are adopting the same rhetoric and employing the same arguments Serbs have used, only to chase away all others from their idea of Yugoslavia. Once again they are proving that a state based on hegemony of the largest nation, whoever it might be, is inapplicable in Balkan space.\(^{16}\)

Again as many times in Bosnian history the solution for the “Bosnian question” is laying inside as much as outside of Bosnia, and a “peaceful Bosnia” can only be achieved with the genuine help of Belgrade and Zagreb. For now the future of the Bosnian state remains uncertain, as three mutually hostile political elites are putting the finishing touches on three ethnically clean national states within a single territory of Bosnia.

Cultural Cleansing

The crucial conflict between the nation state and the ethnically mixed population of Yugoslavia, whose differences were further blurred during Tito’s era, posed a problem for nationalist elites aiming at the construction of not only ethnically - but also culturally-clean states. The contradiction is solved at the expense of diversity and multiculturalism forged in centuries of coexistence. It was destroyed by ethnic cleansing, rape and murder during the war, and finished off with cultural cleansing during and after the war. The territory physically ‘liberated’ from others had to be marked with its own visible cultural

markers. Those belonging to the cultural memory of the ‘Other’ and to common past had to be mercilessly removed.

Defining itself against the ‘Other’, and re-establishing differences, real or imagined ones in history, religion, language and everyday habits and is pursued by all national elites with equal fervour. The wars pursued were not only wars for territory but also wars for a new memory, for new identities that would be the guarantor of loyalty to the new state formations. The horrible war changed the ethnic, social and cultural picture of Bosnian society in many ways. The change in cultural identity, although visible in the whole region of the Former Yugoslavia, remains most drastic there.

Any traveler through Bosnia was always impressed by the proximity of the church towers of two Christian confessions, minarets and synagogues, and modest but still distinctive secular, Byzantine, Latin and Islamic architecture, creating the landscape of Bosnian cities. Any traveler today will be dismayed by the oppressive style and size of brand-new sacral architecture, standing in a stark contrast, not only against the natural and architectural landscape of the cities, but also against the dilapidating state of public infrastructure. New religious monuments are mushrooming all over Bosnia, financed by the rich Saudi sheiks, the Vatican, or in the case of the Orthodox Church by the state itself (Serb Republic). These new cultural markers are erected almost exclusively with the common goal of excluding the ‘Other’, marking new cultural and territorial boundaries established by war.

This process that started with war remains the most visible in the Serb Republic. As already mentioned in chapter five, the Serb Army, during the war, systematically cleansed its territory of any Islamic monuments, mosques, libraries, medresas, even some of the Ottoman secular architecture. The most precious sacral monuments, such as the sixteen-century mosques of Banja Luka, Ferhadija and Arnaudija, as well as Colored Mosque of Foca were dynamited, and even their rubble was deposited in a way that could not be recovered after the war. The Oriental Institute of Sarajevo with its priceless collection of artefacts from the Ottoman period was burned to the ground, as well as the National Library in Sarajevo. Similar acts, although smaller in volume, were perpetrated by Croatian forces in their brief war with Bosniaks, culminating in the destruction of the medieval city of Pocitelj, Stolac and Mostar’s old town with its world-famous Old
Bridge. The common aim of these efforts was the elimination of any presence of Bosniak culture and civilisation on those territories. In effect they effaced Bosnia’s multicultural past.  

After the war the same policy is continued with systematic obstruction of efforts to rebuild some of these monuments, especially mentioned Ferhadija mosque in Banja Luka. The efforts in inventing a ‘new past’ went so far that even historical photographs of the city of Banja Luka, found in The Museum of Serb Republic, were retouched or selected in a way to erase any trace of mosques and minarets and therefore present it as if it was always an exclusively Serb city. There is also a systematic effort to erase old identities, even symbolically, visible in the change of names of some of the cities after the war in Serb Republic. On the other hand renaming the names of the streets and schools and city squares is hardly a Serb specialty and is common on all territories of the former Yugoslavia. All political elites found this as an effective and cheap way to impose a new identity, and erase any trace of the common past and heritage.

At the same time there is another campaign of destruction of cultural heritage that is being waged against the Bosniaks, this time from their own ranks. After the war there was a noticeable shift among Bosniaks, led by some conservative forces within their community, towards putting emphasize on their religion at the base of collective identity. This is a consequence of the experience of a horrible war waged against them by their Christian neighbours and prevalent feeling in this community that the West abandoned them. There is noticeable influx of Islamic symbols and religious discourse into all realms of everyday life (replacement of the secular greetings with specific Muslim ones, introduction of Islamic religious education even into daycares with simultaneous

19 The example of the town of Bosanski (Bosnian) Brod is illustrative. Before the war the Serbs were a minority in this Bosnian town on the banks of the river Sava, making only 33 percent of the population. After the war, according to division of territory, stipulated by the Dayton agreement, the town ended up in the Serb Republic. The local authorities changed its name into Srpski (Serbian) Brod. The same fate met the town of Foca that was renamed Srbinje (Serb Town). Kasapovic, Bosna iHercegovina, podijeljeno drustvo i nestabilna drzava, p.118.
expulsion of Santa Claus from them, etc). Moreover, courted by rich Islamic donors from Iran and Saudi Arabia, many in the Bosniak community abandoned the values of unique Bosnian Islam, forged in the centuries of the Balkan multicultural exchange characterized by the presence and tolerance of others. Instead they turned towards a new imported variant of Islam, better known as Wahabbism.

The battle between secular Bosniaks and liberal Bosniak intellectuals on one side and increasingly influential religious hawks on the other is still being fought, with the former being every day more marginalized and the later being more assertive. At the same time, the new cultural markers have begun to grow in the Bosnian cities as they increasingly become more ethnically and culturally homogenous. Under the guise of architectural preservation Saudi groups are perpetrating another wave of destruction of Bosniak and Bosnian cultural heritage. The interior of the most important mosque in Bosnia and Europe, the sixteenth century Begova dzamija of Sarajevo, was destroyed only to be restored in Saudi style. The new mosques, massive odd architectural edifices, are mushrooming all over Bosnia, trying not only to erase the distinctive Balkan-Muslim architectural patterns, but also to impose a narrower cultural and religious identity.

As a result of ethnic and cultural cleansing Bosnian space is separated and divided as never before in history. Banja Luka is today an exclusively Serb city as an aftermath of expulsion of its large pre-war Croat and Bosniak populations and systematic post-war efforts to erase any trace of their presence by marking it with exclusive Orthodox and

---

20 Tone Bringa, “Islam and the Quest for Identity”, in Shatzmiller, Islam and Bosnia, p.32.
21 Wahabbism is the Islamic teaching imported from Saudi Arabia and was virtually unknown in Bosnia before the war. The name comes from the eighteen-century founder of the sect Ibn-Al Wahhab. The teaching became the official ideology of Saudi Monarchy and heavily influenced the Taliban regime of Afghanistan. It arrived in Bosnia during the war with hundreds of Islamic fighters (mujaheddins) who fought along Bosniak forces during the war and remained in the country after, often marrying locally and establishing the net of grassroots Islamic organizations. This type of Islam is intolerant and completely foreign to Bosnia’s Islam. It has to be stressed that before the war the Bosnian Muslims were among the most secularized in the world, European in their orientation, fully integrated and most committed to Yugoslav society. This turn towards exclusive religious identity by one part of population has to be seen against the background of the recent war and the feeling of abandonment by their neighbours and the West. It cannot be used, as Serbian propaganda often does, as an after-fact to justify the campaign of ethnic cleansing waged against them. It has to be stressed that the overwhelming majority of the Bosniaks still resists this process, and remains secular. Saudi Arabia admitted spending over one billion dollars on “Islamic activities” in Bosnia. The aid is granted exclusively to support Wahabism. Nenad Pejic “A Suicide of Multi-ethnic Sarajevo”, www.rferl.org, retrieved on May 11. 2010. Also, Sells, “Islam in Serbian Religious Mythology”, in Shatzmiller, Islam and Bosnia, p. 85.
Serb cultural markers. Cities like Sarajevo, which was a multiethnic melting pot for centuries, are increasingly losing its multicultural character and taking on the exclusive Bosniak identity. Other ethnic groups, and secular Bosniaks and their intellectuals, are increasingly marginalized, while public life in Sarajevo is determined by the values of one ethnic group. The war exodus of Croats, Serbs and Bosniak urban middle class to the West have made it more ethnically compact but also often overwhelmed with culturally insensitive and revengeful newcomers more inclined to follow religious hawks.23

The battle for dominance and control of Bosnian cities is a parallel process in all three parts of Bosnia, yet ironically it could have most disastrous consequences for Bosniaks. History has certainly bestowed this community with the hardest burden to bear. Bosniak leadership is deeply divided between those who still want a secular civic state and those who are more open to some sort of religiously dominated Bosniak mini-state. The embrace of the latter option would ultimately lead to the dissolution of Bosnia, but more dangerously, to cultural and geographical isolation of this unique Balkan community.

**With God on Our Side**

Croatian sociologist of religion Vjekoslav Perica identifies the three major religious institutions and their respective leaderships as one of the major players that contributed to the resurrection of the differences stirring up conflict among the citizens of

---

23 This is a parallel process in all three nations and it has affected all Bosnian cities. It has to be remembered that this was a war for nation states and therefore ethnically clean territories, in which the main supporters but also victims were found among the rural populations. Many people were made permanent refugees; victims of ethnic cleansing that could not or did not want to return to the places where they lived. Instead the national elites wanted them to settle on ethnically consolidated territories. Often they moved into cities changing their face in the most profound way. People who had lost their homes, had members of their family killed, or were made victims only because they bore the ‘wrong’ name and belonged to the certain ethnic group, had more reason to adapt the new identity after the war. However, that resulted not only in the “paesanization” of Sarajevo and all other Bosnian cities, but also it created another social rift between the local population and newcomers. Despite the fact they are of the same ethnic background, local populations in both entities consider newcomers as uncultured, aggressive, culturally different and politically radical. Anders Stefansson, “Urban Exile: Locals, Newcomers and the Cultural Transformation of Sarajevo” in Xavier Bougarel, The New Bosnian Mosaic, Ashgate, 2007, pp.60-65. Also Nenad Pejic, “The Suicide of Multietnic Sarajevo”, www.rferl.org retrieved on April 26.2010.
Yugoslavia. Caring more about regaining their lost influence and securing their leading role and less about the spirituality and welfare of their flock, they sided with their respective nationalistic elites and denied the legitimacy of the Yugoslavian state, helping to push it into a war. Although the latest war was not a religious war, religion was used to underline differences and give legitimacy to nationalistic leaders and their policy of ethnic division. As a result the real origins and motives of conflict were obfuscated and it was often portrayed, home and abroad, as an ethno-religious war.

While war was raging the religious elites blessed those going to war who they knew would be committing crimes against civil populations. In effect they were endorsing the results of such a campaign and condoning the destruction of thousands of churches and mosques belonging to other religious communities.

After the war the religious institutions and their respective political elites had renewed their vows and forged the marriage of interest and convenience. The religious authorities ensured the loyalty of their flock to the new cultural creed of the society, which was often connected with a particular political option rather than the interest of the whole society. In return they were granted with many concessions, the restitution of property and influence in society and presence in the media. Although all of the new states are defined as secular liberal democracies, the religious institutions enjoyed a prominent role and excessive influence in society, often seriously undermining the boundaries of separation between the church and state.

25 The leaders of religious organizations were always concerned about the destruction of their property yet they hardly ever condemned the same thing happening to the spiritual and religious heritage of the others. Illustrative is example of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which condemned and extensively criticized the destruction of invaluable Orthodox monasteries in Kosovo in 1999. The Serb Army left the province of Kosovo after the short war with NATO, leaving precious Serbian monasteries to the mercy of Albanian nationalists. Many were damaged and burned. At the same time they never protested when the Serb forces systematically destroyed thousands of mosques and Roman Catholic churches during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. See Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, pp.276-282. On the other hand it would be unfair to assign this type of hypocrisy as unique for religious leadership, as it was equally demonstrated by wider cultural elites. Writer Miljenko Jergovic, a Bosnian Croat, dedicates with irony his poignant text about the destruction of the invaluable Old Bridge in Mostar to all Croatian architects and historians of art. Only two years earlier, when Serb forces were shelling Dubrovnik, these Croatian intellectual circles were justifiably and loudly protesting the destruction of this precious city and conveying contempt over the silence of their Serbian counterparts. Two years later while Croatian forces destroyed the Old Bridge to erase the architectural presence of the Other on what they considered as their ‘sacred’ territory, no one from those Croatian circles uttered a single word of protest. Miljenko Jergovic, “Most blizi bogu”, *Naći bonton*, Durieux, Zagreb, 1998, p.68.
After the war the surge of religious belief and church attendance was recorded everywhere on the territory of the Former Yugoslavia (except in the case of ethnically homogenous and economically prosperous Slovenia). Sociologists of religion do not see this as a sign of genuine religious revival, or reversal of the trend of secularization established with the rule of communism. Perica and Velikonja argue that new worshipers were in fact revering their ethno-religious nation states and that we should be rather talking about “patriotic religiosity”, that has been inextricably linked to political projects of nationalism and anticommunism, and last - but not least - the simple opportunism.

The reason for the return of religion was found in the simple fact that national religious organisations were elevated to the level of state religion. Religious belief was underlined as an inextricable part of one’s identity, often publicly demonstrated by state officials, stressing the special connection that exists between the Church and its respective nation, between people’s identity and their respective religion, whether they were believers or not. In the new system of social values religion was often presented as a very substrate of the nation.26

26 Velikonja argues there was always a large overlap between religion and nationality for the three largest nationalities in Yugoslavia, especially for Serbs because of the historical role that the Orthodox Church played in the history of the Serb nation. In the Ottoman “millet” system, for several hundred years, the Orthodox Church took a role of not only a spiritual but also the secular leader of its nation. After the period of repression in the time of communism, it reclaimed its position in society and today it does not shy away from exercising its influence on the secular leadership of the country. It publicly supports the government to ensure and confirm its status of the national church and secure its influence on the educational system. It insists on its leadership role in ‘national revival’ and in maintaining the ethnic heritage. Velikonja finds an explanation for the traditionally strong role of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia not only in the power of the Vatican but also in the Croatian belief that they were nationally threatened. This drove Croats close to their Church and made them see it as a national institution. Yet, because of the universal character of the Roman Catholicism, the Catholic Church in Croatia never officially became a national church. Perica agrees and argues that the ethnicization of the Croatian Catholic Church is a recent phenomenon. It was not only connected to Croatian perceived threat to their nation, but also to the decisions of Vatican in the 1960’. At that time the Vatican decided to start fostering ethnic identities of the national churches in order to use ethnic nationalism as a potential weapon against the threat of communism and secularization. As the result, so-called Crkva u Hrvata (Church in the Croat People) from the 1970’s developed all traits of the ethnic church. It gave full backing and legitimation to the Croat national state. As a reward it was granted with many privileges, such as the permanent financial assistance from the state budget, restitution of the property, and, most important, it was elevated to the status of a state church. Several times its leadership openly interfered with the government business, intimidating and even openly bullying secular authorities. The Church in the Croat People and the Serbian Orthodox Church, despite of their mutual animosity that had contributed to the two worst historical conflicts between Croats and Serbs, are today mirror images of each other. Finally the same goes to the Islamic Community of Bosnia. Although the least nationalistic among three before the war, ironically after the war they had come to resemble very much the pre-war role and activities of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Islamic Community of Bosnia became a main carrier of the memory of crimes perpetrated against its own people. It organized massive commemorations and reburials for the victims, insisting on the memory of the crime and using it to justify its effort to separate
The religious organizations enthusiastically embraced their renewed role as the main providers of new identities. They furnished the new nation states with the myth of their origins and reconnected new identities with the distant past. By denying legitimacy to the memory of the ‘atheist’ Yugoslavia, they presented themselves as eternal guardians of the ethnic identity, tradition, and continuity of the nation throughout time. As a result the reinvention of the past can be presented as a ‘return to genuine identity’, as if identity is something static and unchangeable. Perica calls this phenomenon ethno clericalism:

“Ethoclericalism is thus both an ecclesial concept and political ideology. It champions a strong homogenous church in strong homogenous state, with both institutions working together as the guardians of the ethnic community. Ethnic churches depend on the nation state as much as the state depends on them.”

Unfortunately in many cases this merging of a religious and national identity is colored by negative connotations. Instead of trying to mend the wounds of the war and foster an ecumenical dialogue, the religious authorities, with the exception of a few brave intellectuals from its ranks, often act in the opposite direction. They do not shy away from trying to influence political discussions and exercise their influence on the political life of successor countries. They often criticize governments for decisions that do not appeal to their interests and try to directly influence the outcome of the elections. Through the justification of the crimes committed during the war, and flagrant violations of the human rights after the war, they have turned themselves into keepers of the memory of war, further contributing to the policy of division and intolerance and the imposition of the “otherness”.

Bosniaks from their Christian neighbours and underline their religion as the basis of their identity. Its leadership never hid its affinity towards the Islamic state and tried on several occasions to influence secular authorities, most notably by trying to propose a ban on mixed marriages and to reintroduce the Sharia law. It pushed for the introduction of Arabic as the first foreign language in the schools (rather than usual, English or German) and exposed Bosniaks to the influence of foreign and intolerant forms of Islam coming from Saudi Arabia. All three religious communities, with the notable exception of some individuals from the ranks of Bosnian Franciscans, remain deeply anti-liberal forces and bastions of nationalism. See Perica, Balkan Idols, pp.169-218. Also, Mitja Velikonja, Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Texas A&M University Press, 2003, pp.261-282.

The Education of the Future Warrior

Any education is inevitably indoctrination by the sole fact that it is the most important way of transmitting a social knowledge. That characteristic earns it the most important place in the priorities of policymakers in any state. In the process of enculturation, history textbooks take the most important place. They are chief means for shaping the national identity as they canonize the national narrative, establish the desirable image of the past and the image of one’s own nation, and define the image of the ‘Other’.

Dubravka Stojanovic compared history textbooks of all the successors state of Yugoslavia and came to conclusion that, despite offering a very different interpretation of the common past, they resemble each other very much. They all adhere to an ultimate historical revisionism in order to produce a new national identity. The manipulation of historical facts has created images of idealized and “eternally righteous” nations, which is presented exclusively in the historical role of an innocent victim of the neighboring villain nations. Any undesirable events in the past that do not fit in that picture are simply omitted, ignored, or given a twist that de-emphasizes their own responsibility for it. This resulted in the creation of a one-sided and skewed vision of history. By imposing a “dangerous and wrong idea that relations between peoples and their ‘historical characteristic’ never change, history is turned into a vicious circle.”²⁸ Instead of being places of knowledge schools are being turned into official breeding grounds for intolerance, animosity and revanchism and, therefore, future divisions and conflicts.

The educational war is by far most intense in Bosnia. Far worse than material problems that are plaguing the Bosnian educational system - from inadequately paid and trained teachers, dilapidated infrastructure and chronic lack of funds - is its irrational set up in which Bosnia has thirteen educational laws (two on the level of entities, and ten cantonal laws), none of them on the level of the state. It is the wider concept of the divided post-war Bosnian society that is being reflected in the educational system and

that has enabled its fragmentation. As a result, intolerance, prejudice and ethnic divisions are simply built into the school system.29

The study conducted by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights30 identified several factors that are dividing Bosnian children and fostering educational segregation. All of them are in fact imposed from factors outside of school, especially the destructive and divisive political discourse in the country, the negative influences from the media, the culture of violence, war memories, or the negative influence of teachers and family. The textbooks are saturated with nationalism, full of references in which one’s own nation is portrayed in an overly positive light. Textbooks of all three nations support division and promote distance towards others.

Ethnically clean schools were instituted just after the war, when the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OESCE) encouraged the set up of a school system called “two schools under the same roof”. This was supposed to be a temporary measure, introduced in order to prevent ethnic violence among refugees returning to their homes. The projected integration never took place and political authorities never showed any will to abandon the existing segregation. It rather has left deep roots in society over the last fifteen years, reflecting the existing tensions between Croats and Bosniaks in the Federation and giving legitimacy to the cultural stranglehold of the ethnic majority even within the school system.

Under the system Bosniak and Bosnian Croat children go to the same building, but are completely segregated in the process of schooling. If the school is small they might share a classroom learning mathematics or science but they are separated when it comes to so-called ‘national subjects’, geography, history, and language. These subjects are taught by ideologically biased teachers, from different textbooks that interpret the same facts from opposing points of view, and often promote a language of intolerance towards other ethnic groups.31

29 The segregation is not only limited to primary and secondary education but exists all the way up to higher education. Bosnian universities are open to every nation but large regional university centers attract mostly students from their respective ethnic group. Rusmir Mahmutcehajic “Rasprava, rat u Bosni i Hercegovini” u Magas &Zbanic Rat u Hrvatskoj i Bosni I Hercegovini, p.265.
31 The study states one example from Geography textbooks that illustrates what is being taught to the Bosnian children. The Bosnian Serb Geography textbook states: “Orthodox Christianity is the most
The Serb Republic, insisting on the educational and cultural unity of the Serbian people as its strategic long-term goal, has a more centralized educational system. That does not mean that the system is less discriminatory towards the other two nations that frequent its schools. The textbooks are imported from Serbia; the curriculum emphasizes Serb history, language and religion. That means that the small minority of those who have returned are exposed to learning the religion and history of those who forced them from their homes in the first place.

The situation is repeated in cantons where Bosniaks or Croats are majority, only with a different pretext. Religious education was introduced in all public schools as mandatory, under the excuse of the inability to find teachers for a few minority students, only the religion of majority student population is taught. Minorities, of course, can opt out, but that leads the students to further isolation and discrimination by their peers. All of this motivates parents to drive their children long distances in order to provide them with education within their own ethnic group, and contributes to further segregation of society.

Despite the protests of helpless parents, weak liberal forces within Bosnia and the wider International community, this unprecedented educational apartheid persists. It is cultivated by respective political elites as a continuation of the same wartime politics of ethnic cleansing, division and intolerance. This catastrophic policy aims to produce ethnically isolated, claustrophobic and intolerant students in order to finish the process of imposing a new cultural identity and facilitate the final division of Bosnian territory.

And in the end, as a curiosity, there is one striking issue to take note of, which all of the opposing curriculums agree upon, and that is the common history and experience important religion. Muslims are Islamic Serbs and Croats are Serb Catholics. The maps are showing all Serbian states, Belgrade is the capital of all Serbs”. A Bosnian Croat Geography book states: “Muslims are religion and not an ethnic group. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a centuries old Croat state.” Finally, a Bosniak Geography textbook states: “Islam is the best religion. All Serbs did aggression and genocide in Bosnia”. None of this will contribute to reconciliation, tolerance and lasting peace. Sanja Hodzic, “Posast u temeljima etnickih predrasuda.” retrieved on April 26, 2010.

In cantons with Bosniak majority the textbooks emphasize aggression against Bosniaks and their suffering in the last war, while in the districts where Croats are the majority the outlook is presented from an exclusive Croatian perspective, teaching the Croatian curricula and using Croatian textbooks. Both Serbian and Croatian Curriculum neglect and ignore any links with Bosnia and insist on their cultural connection with Serbia and Croatia. Christine Bernard, “Majority Rules: The Educational System in Bosnia”, www.christinebernardz.wordpress.com, retrieved on April 25.2010. Also Nenad Pejic, “Bosnian Schools Teach Reading, Writing-and Division”, www.rferl.org, retrieved on May 2.2010.
of life in the Former Yugoslavia. That period of genuine ethnic equality and national prosperity of all is today mostly referred to as a “dark period of overall communist oppression”, especially of ‘authentic’ national values (although most of the nationalistic politicians and textbook authors are communist turncoats), and the memory of it is systematically devalued eroded and obliterated.33

The Rediscovery of the Ethnic Past

As we can see from our story, Bosniaks have been relatively tardy in their self-definition as a nation, finishing that process in the late twentieth century. Their Serbian and Croatian neighbours, who, in their parallel assimilatory schemes, considered them only as Islamicized Serbs and Croats, denied them the status of a separate nation for a long time. If any doubts or ambiguities have existed back in the late sixties when they were officially recognized as a full-fledged nation, then the latest war definitely finished the process of nation building. This is confirmed appropriately with the adoption of a new national name (Bosniak instead of Muslim), proclamation of its own language, but also by the resurrection of the national myth. The latest war, waged against them from both sides, and especially a massacre of Srebrenica committed by Serb forces, has provided this community with a powerful symbol of collective suffering and struggle for survival.

Smith argues that because the modern nations are derived from the long-lived ethnies the connection with idiosyncratic mythology, culture, including the association with the ancient homeland, is crucial for the maintenance of its distinctive identity.34 Now with Bosnian independence achieved, the Bosniak cultural elite has reached deep into a past to provide its imagined community with the myth of its origins, to connect it with its ‘real ancestors’ and to prove its historic continuity and connection to its homeland.

Similar to two other myths, which we analyzed in chapter two, the scant historical facts are ignored, manipulated or simply reinvented, confirming the tendency of all

34 Smith, The Nation in History, pp.69-70.
mythmakers to read the past from current point of view, in a most beneficial way. Once again, mythologization of the distant historical narratives has proved as a useful tool in achieving particular political goals and of prescribing modern cultural identity.

The modern Bosniak myth focuses on the Bosnian early medieval state and its tolerant rulers that allowed the existence of different churches on its territory. Early medieval Bosnia was formed on the territory between Catholic Dalmatia and Orthodox Serbia: “often called a meeting ground between two great churches, it was more a no-man’s land.” Although under the official rule of Rome from great schism in 1054, because of Bosnia’s isolated position, the church veered away from Rome, and from 1250 the existence of the Bosnian Church is recorded. Yet, evidence shows that Bosnian rulers were quite tolerant towards other faiths existing on their territory, including the dualistic sect of Bogumils. This brought accusations of heresy from Hungarians. In an effort to obtain a permit for a crusade from Rome, they charged that the Bosnian Church was following a dualistic theory of Bogumilism.

Accusations of heresy had stirred controversy. Question about the nature of the Bosnian church and its relation with the Bogumils were the most debated issue among scholars for decades. For a while it seemed that the Bosnian Church was Bogumil in its nature. However, the newer historical and inter-disciplinary research has refuted Bogumil’s theory altogether. Donia and Fine insist that, unlike the Western Cathars, the Bosnian Church retained all symbols of Catholic Theology, the cross, the altar, the cult of saints, artwork with religious subject mater, etc. They argue that all denominations in Bosnia, because of its peripheral geographic position were of very weak faith.

Malcolm claims that the constant accusations of heresy have to be seen in light of Hungarian efforts to strengthen its position in Bosnia, and also as an excuse for justifying

---

36 At that time Catholics could be found only in the peripheral areas in the west and the north, while Orthodox were found only in Hum (modern eastern Herzegovina). The rest of the Bosnians were adherent of the Bosnian Church. Bogumils found a shelter in liberal Bosnia after they were expelled from Catholic Dalmatia. They were similar to Bulgarian Bogumils, or their Western counterparts Cathars of Southern France. Bogumils preached a Manichean ‘dualistic’ theology, according to which, Satan was equally powerful as God, the whole visible world is Satan’s creation, and the only way of renouncing the material world was by following the ascetic way of life. They were rejecting the Baptism, the Old Testament, as well as the Cross, as a symbol of false belief. See Malcolm, Bosnia, A Short History, pp.28-29.
37 Donia and Fine, Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed, p.23.
a crusade. The Pope’s legate who convoked Bosnian Ban Kulin and Bosnian church officials to a meeting at Bilino Polje (today’s city of Zenica), and made them sign a declaration of loyalty to the Catholic faith, did not find any signs of heresy, but rather a simple negligence.\(^{38}\) Other historians support this claim: “In all the cultural element of medieval Bosnia there are no Bogumil elements, nor those of any heresy. The key text-from the Bilino Polje Abjuration of 1203 down to the 1466 Will of Gost Radin-quite explicitly operates with Christian formulae and terminology.”\(^{39}\)

Nonetheless, modern Bosniak revisionists and mythmakers insist on the Bogumil character of the Bosnian Church, arguing that its members, angry with the Catholic Church and its efforts to assimilate them, converted in massive numbers to Islam. This way modern Bosniaks could be connected to the early Bosnian state and its legacy. This is the incorrect reading of historical facts. It is clear by now that the Bosnian Church was neither Bogumil (dualistic), nor is it certain that it was even a church of a majority of Bosnians.\(^{40}\) The Ottoman conquest, as argued in chapter two, had produced tectonic social change as the Bosnian population converted in very large numbers. However, this massive change of cultural identity was protracted and probably due to the fact that Bosnians of all confessions were of weak faith.

Moreover, there is no special link between the Bosnian Church and those who converted to Islam. Bosnians of all three faiths accepted the new religion, and Bosnian Church members were also converting to Catholicism and Orthodoxy. In medieval times religion was a main part of cultural identity, and Islamization meant acceptance of new, all-encompassing system of values that changed in a profound way the public and private life of the community of converts. Rather than keeping the memory of the Bosnian early medieval state and its tradition, Bosniaks saw themselves as an integral part of the

\(^{38}\) Although Bosnia has been part of the Roman Church, it seems that its independent church has followed the Eastern calendar. The liturgy was conducted in the Slav language. It is because of its isolation by geography and lack of proper territorial organization that the Bosnian church gained its autonomy and veered away from Rome “probably leaving much population to practice lowest form of largely priestless folk Christianity.” Malcolm, *Bosnia, A Short History*, p.18. To avoid the threat of a crusade, Bosnian ban Stjepan Kotromanic allowed a Franciscan mission into Bosnia in 1340, and officially accepted Catholicism. All following rulers, with a possible exception of one, were Catholics as well, but remained tolerant toward all faiths on their territory, leaving the choice of religion to the free choice of their subject. There is evidence of the employment of various officials of different faiths on Bosnian court. Fine, “The Various Faiths in the History of Bosnia”, pp.4-5.

\(^{39}\) Lovrenovic, *Bosnia: A Cultural History*, p.53.

\(^{40}\) Fine, “The Various Faiths in the History of Bosnia”, p.5.
Ottoman Empire; proof of this is that for five hundred years of Bosniak written tradition there is not a word about their medieval past. Dzaja argues that this myth rather reveals a sharp spiritual, political and civilizational discontinuity between the Ottoman period and the Bosnian mediaeval state. Bosniaks in fact started their ethno-genesis only with that fateful conversion that enabled them to build their distinctive ethnic community around their new religion.

Bosniak historical revisionism emphasizes Bogumilism as a substrate of Bosniak political and cultural identity, giving it decisive influence of Bosniak ethnogenesis, and presenting it as a struggle to maintain their original heretical identity. This “revisionist” view represents an effort to embed its modern national identity into a distant past, as something that existed before arrival, not only of the Islam, but Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy as well.

Dzaja and Lovrenovic argue that the re-emergence of this myth with the last war, with Bosniak’s simultaneous claim on symbols of the medieval Bosnian state such as coat of arms and monuments as stecak was an attempt to establish the Bosniaks as the main Bosnian nation, with the final goal of marginalization of the other two constitutive nations. Simply, if Bosniaks can be presented as direct descendents of Bosnian Bogumils then they are able to claim Bosnia as its ‘basic’ nation, and show the other two nations as those who did not belong to the original Bosnian people but arrived to Bosnia later. Lovrenovic argues that this only mirrors the earlier Great Serbian and Great Croatian

---

41 Islam deeply imbued all spheres of public and private life of Bosniaks as it changed the whole social structure in a profound way. The population adopted new culture of living, new laws were introduced and internalized over time, the architectural appearance of the cities was changed; the new traditions were accepted. The Bosniak intellectual elite produced a rich body of literature in Persian, Arabic and Turkish language, as well in Alhamiado literature (writing Slavic vernacular in Arabic alphabet), etc. The only custodians of memory of Bosnia’s medieval past were Bosnian Franciscans as their Province, so-called Bosna Srebrena, was the only institution that maintained historical continuity with the medieval Bosnian kingdom. Kasapovic, Bosna i Hercegovina: podijeljeno drustvo i nestabilna drzava, p.146.

42 Dzaja as quoted in Mirjana Kasapovic, Bosna i Hercegovina: podijeljeno drustvo i nestabilna drzava, pp. 141-145.

43 Dzaja as quoted in Kasapovic, Bosna i Hercegovina: podijeljeno drustvo i nestabilna drzava, pp. 144-5.

44 One more mystery unique to Bosnia remains to be solved and that is the origins of medieval gravestones, known as stecak. These huge stone monoliths, often covered with elaborate carvings, are found mostly within the borders of medieval Bosnia There are abut 60 000 of them and they belong to all three Christian denominations. Lovrenovic, Bosnia: A Cultural History, p.46.

claim on Bosnian past and its territory.\textsuperscript{46} These three “revisionist” claims are mutually exclusive, yet none of them is strong enough to eliminate the others, or too weak to be eliminated,\textsuperscript{47} proving only that the Bosnian riddle is unsolvable along the argument of nation state.

Language of Division

Miroslav Krleza, one of the greatest Croatian and Yugoslav writers, and a long time adherent to the Yugoslav idea, stated back in 1967: “Croatian and Serbian are one and the same language, which Croats call Croatian and Serbs Serbian.”\textsuperscript{48} This often quoted sentence was his attempt to calm down tensions after the last quarrel about the name and nature of the Serbo-Croat language, which had erupted in the late sixties.\textsuperscript{49}

As described in the second chapter, the designation of the language as the most important feature of the nation was the main feature of German Romantic theories. It facilitated the formation of large states and acted as a base for the creation of wider ethno national identity. With the latest Yugoslavian war the language was turned from the means of communication into means of separation, state building and division. During - but, especially, after - the war, the body of what was in Tito’s Yugoslavia called Serbo-Croat or Croato-Serbian language was dismembered into four distinct languages. This action confirms one of the most frequently used aphorisms among linguists to point to the

\textsuperscript{46} Bosniak revision of the past did not end only at the medieval period. During the latest war a number of prominent Bosniak historians started the revision of a more recent past in the light of the “Muslim genocide discourse”. They argued that for the last three centuries Bosniaks were exposed to nothing from their neighbors, but a series of genocides, aimed at their extermination and cultural assimilation. According to them, the attempts for physical examination that started with the massacres committed by Serbian Chetnik forces during the Second World War were only continued in the last Bosnian war. Moreover, these arguments interpreted the land reform in 1918 as an economic genocide against Muslims, which was followed by cultural one - Muslim secularization during the life in both Yugoslavias. This revision of the past was certainly aimed at Bosniak victimization and contributed significantly to the national homogenization of the Bosniak nation during the war, yet it could hardly be the basis for reconciliation with their neighbors after the war. See Ger Duijzings, “Comemorating Srebrenica” in Bougarel’s The New Bosnian Mosaic, pp.142-166.

\textsuperscript{47} Dubravko Lovrenovic, “Bosnjacka recepcija bosanskog srednjovjekovlja, geneza bougumiliškog mita i njegove suvremene političke implikacije”, Zenicke Sveske, decembar 2005, p.11.


\textsuperscript{49} On Declaration on the Name and Status of the Croatian Literary Language see chapter 4, page 90.
difference between the dialect and the language: “A language is a dialect with an army and navy.”

The fact that the Lingua Franca of the South Slavs is called with four different names is not surprising - after all the consensus about the name of neo-stokavian dialect whose unity was achieved in 1850, was never fully reached. What is concerning in this new arbitrary separation of language is not the change in name, but rather the violence committed against the body of language. Four out of six Yugoslavian nations speak the same language in linguistic terms and small differences in the two variants of the common language, as well as two distinct literary expressions have always existed. Yet as with everything else, those slight differences were enlarged and emphasized in an effort to ascribe a new identity and define the ‘Other’, which now has to be excluded even from the same language, at any cost.

Croats emphasized the unique features of their language, and along with emphasizing their historical affinity towards the purity of language they have started insisting on neologisms, anachronisms, and especially on purging it from anything that could even remotely be labelled as ‘Serbianism’. To separate a language that has been naturally evolving for more than a century, many new words were invented, and many recovered from distant past. Although many Croats were more sensitive to issues of language and took great pride in their distinctive linguistic heritage, the process of linguistic engineering was so violent and so obviously politically motivated that it quickly became an object of many jokes (It was mockingly nicknamed novorijek (newspeak) after the fictional language in George Orwell’s famous novel 1984). The goal of the latest linguistic engineering once it is officially introduced and enforced through

---

50 In 1861 after the standardization of the two languages by the Illyrians on Croatian side and Karadzic and Danicic on Serbian brought the two languages in sync, Croatian Sabor was discussing how to call the new standard language. Out of four proposals (vernacular, Croatian-Slavonian, Croatian or Serbian, Yugoslav) the first choice was Yugoslav, but that decision was overturned next year and the name Croatian was adopted. The official name of the language changed to reflect the political changes in the common state, but in everyday life in Croatia language was called Croatian and in Serbia was always called Serbian. Only in Bosnia, reflecting its adherence to communist ideology of brotherhood and unity, the language was called with its official name Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian. The name of the language was a topic of the heated debate in the Croatian spring, as discussed in chapter 4 p.21. See also Goldstein, Croatia, A History, p.79.

the educational system, is to emphasize Croatian ethno-national identity and move Croatian in a separate direction, away from Serbian.

The damage on the other side of this linguistic ‘great divide’ is equally big. The Serbs, in accordance with their linguistic tradition always reaffirmed supremacy of vernacular, allowing literary language to be permeated with words from everyday popular culture. Yet, the political violence against the body of common language is visible in the proclamation of Cyrillic alphabet as the only official script of Serbia’s administration, in 2006. This opened the doors for abolishing bi-alphabetism (The Latin alphabet is not suppressed in the standard language where choice of the script remains personal). The Serb Republic of Bosnia also insists on the use of Cyrillic, although bi-alphabetism, common for Serbs, is not abolished. A more significant attack on language was attempted in 1993, with the artificial implementation of ekavian dialect in the Serb Republic (ekavian is characteristic only for Serbia proper, Bosnian and Croatian Serbs were always speaking ijekavian variant of the stokavian dialect). This attempt to accompany the campaign of ethnic and cultural cleansing with a linguistic one, and further divide Bosnian Serbs from their neighbours was unsuccessful and - at least for now - it has been abandoned.

The Montenegrin political elite after achieving independence also moved in the direction of the establishment of a separate language. This was an attempt to erase the ambiguity about their ethnic origins and sustain their statehood. The recently published Dictionary and Orthography of the Montenegrin language added three new letters to their alphabet with the minister of culture publicly arguing for adding a few more. Just a few days after, new computer keyboards appeared on the market with the new letters. The implementation of the new orthography and proclaimed differences through the school system remains a task yet to be accomplished.

Bosniaks also introduced a new language, the Bosnian language. Its distinction from the other three is achieved by the excessive use of Turcisms, that Bosnians of all three nationalities did often use in their everyday speech before the war but were never the part of literary language, and adoption of few archaisms. This is not the only

controversy with the ‘new’ language. The Bosnian language is the *de facto* language of Bosniaks, as Bosnian Serbs and Croat insist that they speak Serbian and Croatian respectively, therefore some linguists argue the more appropriate name for the language should be Bosniak language. Arguments of Bosnian linguist that it would be absurd to expect from Bosniaks to keep the old official name of language or adopt a new name unrelated to them are logical. On the other hand, linguistic separation aims at national homogenization of Bosniaks and underlines their connection to Bosnia as a political entity, aiming at the same time at denationalization of Serbs and Croats within Bosnia.\(^5^5\)

The disputes about the name and the nature of Stokavian dialect that South Slavs speak are old as the language itself and it was always obvious that this was not only a linguistic question. Krleza’s disciple Predrag Matvejevic argued that the name of the language should not be dramatized and noticed that linguistic tolerance always reflected the mutual relation of South Slavs.\(^5^6\) When those relations were good the linguistic differences were underplayed, but whenever relations were bad differences were emphasized to the point of absurdity. The current process of language diversion instigated by political elites will be tested by time as well as the ability of South Slavs to continue to communicate across the newly erected linguistic barriers. Perhaps the prospect of future membership in the European Union can at least stop if not reverse the current process.\(^5^7\) Meantime these new languages point to the familiar processes of exclusion and struggle for the establishment of a nation-state and a distinct cultural identity.

---


\(^{57}\) In the resolution regarding Croatia’s impending membership in the EU, some provisions are incorporated with which Croatia is obliged not to block the future process of adoption of other countries of former Yugoslavia, on the basis of separate language. By the existing EU laws, the language of the every member country enjoys the status of an official language of the Union, and all official documents have always to be presented in all member languages. Every member has a right of veto in most important decisions. Yet, anticipating the future membership of the rest of the former Yugoslav republics and stressing the high cost of unnecessary translation, Europe demands the compromise between former Yugoslav republics when discussing their language differences. In another words, they have a right to call their own language the way they want, as long as the official EU documents don’t have to be translated four times unnecessarily. This might perhaps show some pragmatic and rational approach to a heated Balkan linguistic battle. E-novine, “EU trazi povratak hrvatsko-srpskog jezika”, www.e-novine, retrieved on January 21.2010.
The past fifteen years after the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia have brought seven new states to life. They have all defined themselves as nation states of their respective ethnic majority. The process that was started during the war with ethnic and cultural cleansing has continued with the post war construction of a new cultural identity. National designers have employed every single weapon in order to delineate between people who shared many common traits. In this process, the new, narrower ‘authentic’ identity was served to the constituency - something that is much different than the multilayered, ‘inauthentic and schizophrenic’ Yugoslav identity that had been disgraced and abandoned at any cost.

Smith wrote: “The ability of nationalism to portray and forge a collective cultural identity is integral to its state-capturing capacity, for it seeks state power in virtue of its unique cultural values.”

Political elites of the new nation states used nationalism as an ultimate tool to command the obedience of their constituency, to ensure social cohesion and address the issue of legitimacy of rule, even after the war was finished. Nationalistic discourse, employed prior to, and during, the war was ‘normalized’ in the post-war period and dispersed through all avenues of social life, contaminating not only the political discourse but penetrating every pore of social life and popular culture. Its persistence in public discourse after the war is not a coincidence but a systematic effort to justify and finish a tectonic shift in social values put in place in order to erase old connections and rewrite new identities.

The new states ‘reminded’ their citizens of their authentic ethnic identity using symbols and images from the distant and murky past, by employing the symbols of ethnic kitsch or restoration of forgotten folk traditions. They rewrote history textbooks and employed them through the educational system. They promoted separate languages, resurrected old and created new national myths by romanticizing and often forging a past. Under their rule previously positive arguments as partisan struggle, communism and anti-nationalism became negatively charged overnight, while previously negative arguments acquired neutral or even positive meaning. Religions became the most important part of the cultural identity of a population that was overwhelmingly secular before the war.

---

58 Smith, Nationalism and Modernism, p.92.
The war for nation states is finished by a war for a new national memory and cultural identity. The process of writing a new historical truth is hardly anything new in human history. Indeed as the great Czech writer Milan Kundera tells us:

"People are always shouting that they want to create a better future. It’s not true. The future is an apathetic void of no interest to anyone. The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, provoke and insult us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it. The only reason people want to be masters of the future is to change the past. They are fighting for access to the laboratories where photographs are retouched and biographies and histories are rewritten."\(^{60}\)

---

Conclusion

Once Upon the Time There Was a Country...

The demise of Former Yugoslavia was a much publicized and passionately discussed affair among scholars and the wider public. The fact that Yugoslavia’s multicultural project could explode with such a level of violence came as a surprise not only for those who watched from the sidelines but also for those who lived there. To many outsiders it invoked old stereotypes about the Balkans - a place submerged in mythology and ancient hatreds, predestined for constant ethnic conflict. What was to be expected from the area that even contributed an original word to the English dictionary - a pejorative term used to describe endless division, tribalization, constant ethnic conflict and many wars. The Balkans were always portrayed by the West as a volatile mixture, a powder keg that could explode at any minute, a view perhaps best summarized by Churchill’s statement: “Balkans could produce more history than they can consume.”

It is not only the West that adhered to the “clash of civilizations” theory. The myth of an ethnic war was also sustained by similar arguments employed by domestic political elites who were largely responsible for the latest war. They presented conflict as the product of a brief period of democratization in which the ‘authentic’ national identities and unbridgeable cultural differences among Yugoslavs were brought to the surface after being suppressed for fifty years by communist rule.

Despite its complex and unpredictable history a reality often ignored by these stereotypes, prejudices, and convenient excuses remains: no significant ethnic conflict ever occurred among Yugoslavia’s people before World War II. Even that tragic episode has to be seen in a wider frame of the brutal occupation of a country by foreign forces. This study states that, contrary to popular belief, Yugoslavia was not predestined for conflict. In spite of all of its shortcomings and its tragic end, Yugoslavia was a temporarily successful experiment in building a multicultural federation.

The stereotypes of Balkan viciousness and predisposition for constant war are by-products of Western arrogance and their condescension towards people whose history and geographical position on the intersection between diverse civilizations was never
kind to them. Disputes relating to ethnic hatred resurfacing after being repressed by communist strong rule are equally false. They are employed by domestic political elites with a final purpose of hiding the true nature of conflict and abolishing their own responsibility for it.

The Balkans was always a major cultural crossroad, even before the South Slavs moved in during the sixth century. The fact that three great religions and major civilizations met there was its blessing and its curse. This situation created constant friction between the ethnic groups, as well as secured a rich cultural exchange between them. Years of foreign occupation complicated the ethnic picture as they resulted in the dislocation of previously compact and stable ethnic communities. Notwithstanding the significant cultural differences produced by lengthy foreign occupation, this rich and diverse ethnic mix coexisted in relative peace for centuries. Incidents of sporadic violence are matched - if not exceeded - by examples of genuine collaboration and solidarity between these groups.

I have proposed that the conflict was brought in with the advent of the nation state at the end of the nineteenth century and its effort to impose a cultural homogeneity of nation-state over this quintessentially heterogeneous cultural space. Moreover, despite the cultural differences developed during the long foreign rule, the two largest nations - Serbs and Croats - both developed their national consciousness around German Romantic theories of the nation-state. These theories argued that an individual’s attachment to their community is not rational but rather inherited. One draws his citizenship rights from membership in the collective that is bounded with ties of the same language, religion, ethnic tradition and customs of everyday life. In addition, they promoted an ethnically pure state, a model that would wreak havoc in a region that was characterized by “maximum diversity in minimum space.”

Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova proposes that legacies of the fallen Ottoman and Habsburg empires need to be reassessed after the almost two hundred years of a “dubious performance” of nation states: “It is time to reconsider with humility the effects of exporting the nation-state to societies that are ethnic and religious mosaics, and

---

creating a mosaic of nation-states in place of the mosaic of nations.”² This is not to suggest that fallen Empires were superior to what came after them or that life before the nation-state was idyllic. But the South Slavs coexisted in a complex Balkan mosaic for centuries and certainly avoided most of the bloodshed, bitter ethnic and religious wars that characterized the development of Western Europe.³ There is less tolerance and more ethnic conflict in the twentieth century history of the South Slavs than in all the rest of their history combined. Paradoxically, the first conflicts among the Balkan nations were results of a “reconceptualization of space along European lines - in effect, the Europeanization of the Balkans.”⁴

This conflict between the way Balkan ethnic communities came to imagine themselves as nations and demographic and the cultural heterogeneous reality of the space they inhabited, would accompany and burden the existence of both Yugoslavias, contributing to their ultimate demise.

The First Yugoslavia in its short lifespan between the two World Wars did not find the formula to accommodate its diverse people, despite the tremendous energy invested into its creation and huge expectations on each of the unifying sides. Subscribing to the German Romantic theories, Serbian political elites tried to impose a model of the nation-state based on “Serbdom”. They forgot that at least two other nations had also been fully formed by that time, and that Serbs, forming only 40 percent of the population, were not strong enough to impose themselves as the dominant nation.

² Todorova is highly suspicious that Balkan historiographies are equipped, or ready, for such a task, as they were all formed during a century dominated with the idea of nationhood, and therefore determined by it. They all had an important social function to legitimize the nation state and to produce the national consciousness. Western historiographies, according to her, are equally inept, both for their arrogance and often-open disdain toward Balkans. Instead of explaining the Balkans with the same set of rational criteria that the West reserves for itself, they rather conveniently produced the image of the Balkans as a different ‘other’: “The Balkans have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the ‘European’ and the ‘West’ has been constructed.” Maria Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, pp.187-8.

³ Todorova calls on Western historiographers to show some humility when arguing, the so-called ‘organic’ growth of West European societies into nation-states: “This outcome was the result of several centuries of social engineering - ethnic and religious wars and expulsions (i.e., ethnic cleansing), accompanying the process of centralization - triggered by fundamental hostility to heterogeneity, which in the end brought about relatively homogenous polities that ‘organically’ grew into modern nation-states. While this is an obvious reduction of a complex process, it is necessary in order to expose the moral pretensions that inform it.” Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, p.187.

Although essentially a nominal liberal democracy it would fail to provide its people with economic and political prosperity, and bridge the cultural, economic and social differences that were separating them. It never fully established the rule of law. It never guaranteed religious, cultural and national rights to its citizens and it never established an atmosphere of genuine tolerance and accommodation of others.

In spite of the disappointment produced by the experience of the First Yugoslavia and the fratricidal bloodshed of the Second World War, Yugoslavia emerged once again, this time as a product of an authentic anti-fascist struggle of all of its people. Led by a charismatic and capable leader the new country searched for its way in the post-war world firmly divided by the “iron curtain”. After a few sudden ideological turns, Tito would live up to the war promises of setting up a federation that would guarantee the multicultural character of the country and genuine equality to all of its nations. Neatly placing his country between the two blocks locked in the Cold War and securing economic prosperity and western standards of living to his people, for a moment it seemed that Tito and the Communist party had found the solution to Yugoslavia’s riddle.

The concept of the nation state permeated once again the idea of Yugoslavia. Tito was securing and preserving his and the Communist party’s unchallenged grip on power. At the same time, because of the international situation, he kept his country fully open to the West. In a desperate search for political legitimacy further decentralization was embraced within the frame of a one party system. This road was chosen not only to further guarantee the equality of Yugoslavia’s nations but also as the surrogate to much needed profound political and economic changes. Simultaneously developing a political loyalty to Yugoslavia as a political project, along the lines of civic nationalism, was abandoned.

Paradoxically, despite the systematic effort to eradicate divisive manifestations of nationalism, this move only bolstered the ethnic nationalism of its particular parts, as republican oligarchies started seeing themselves as leaders of their respective nations. With the Constitution of 1974, the concept of nation-state was firmly embraced and this time instituted on the level of eight of its constitutive parts. The decentralization within the frame of political monism would ultimately lead to the development of divided
loyalties between federal state and its particular parts. Then, gradually, decentralization would drain the center of any power in favor of its particular parts.

If Tito and the ruling oligarchy had the strength and wisdom to embrace the values of a liberal democracy, allow political pluralism, introduce the rule of law and start building institutions of a civil society, the outcome of the Yugoslav experiment would be much different today. Perhaps that is asking too much, as it would presume a voluntary abolition of power, a feat seldom recorded in human history. Yet, if they at least opened the dispassionate and honest debate about a traumatic experience of the Second World War in a safe environment of a then-strong state, perhaps the nationalist forces would later have had less to bank on. Producing the shared truth of the carnage during the Second World War could perhaps bring closure to the wounds opened by it, demystify the past, and therefore indirectly strengthen the Yugoslav polity.

The process of decentralisation would eventually turn the constitutive republic into full-fledged nation states, increasingly hostile towards each other as interests of their political elites started to diverge. Despite its failure, Yugoslavia found a way to accommodate and include those multilayered and historically conflicted ethnic and national identities. They were never fully reconciled and that the idea of a civic Yugoslav identity was not actively pursued after the early sixties, yet Yugoslav people were living for a long time in an atmosphere of genuine religious and ethnic tolerance that cannot be attributed only to repression. After all, this was by far the most open and free socialist country in the world, by any standard. Even today, almost twenty years after the demise of Yugoslavia its successor states, although nominal democracies, have failed to provide the same level of protection of ethnic and minority rights.

What I am proposing is that despite Yugoslavia’s failure to produce a clearly articulated sense of Yugoslav identity that would connect and overreach the existing ethnic and national cultures, when they started the process of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia at the end of the eighties, political elites had something to destroy. Somehow, that sense of belonging to a unique and diverse cultural space, and the sense of a wider plural and inclusive Yugoslav identity, however immeasurable and hard to prove, was there - and on the verge of articulating itself. This was true especially among the younger
urban generations. Wilmer, who for his study about Yugoslav identity interviewed numerous Yugoslavs, argues that the feeling was there, “pluralistic and inclusive, cultural as well as civic: “Yugoslavia without Croats is not Yugoslavia,” said one Serbian man to me, and another said: “I was Croat when Serbs bombed Dubrovnik; I was Muslim when Croats bombed the Old Bridge in Mostar. It is all part of my culture, its part of who I am.”

The theories of ancient hatreds and unbridgeable differences sees cultural identity as a static category and ignores the fact that social change happened in Yugoslavia during fifty years of common life. People intermingled in the tolerant environment of Yugoslavia and became culturally more similar than ever in their common history. Yugoslav and Bosnian reality was in stark contrast not only with claims of nationalistic elites that life together is impossible because of ethnic differences, but also with their particular political goals:

“Despite the claims made by nationalist leaders, the reality of multinational Yugoslavia still existed in the lives of individual citizens in 1990-91 - in their ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, villages, towns, and cities; in their mixed marriages, family ties across republic boundaries, and second homes in another republic, in their conceptions of ethnic and national coexistence and the compatibility of multiple identities for each citizen; and in the idea of Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

The most successful product of socialist Yugoslavia was its human capital that grew to ignore ethnic and religious differences. At the end of the 1980’s these formed fragile democratic forces - urban, well educated and truly cosmopolitan. They might have secured peaceful transition towards democracy if allowed. What was missing in Yugoslavia was not ethnic but universal democratic rights, a change in political system that would secure the transition to political pluralism, and the development of a rule of law and institutions of civil society. It is exactly these forces that ethnic nationalism was

---

5 Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State and War*, p.108.
employed against. As forces of true change they had to be demobilized and marginalized by conservative political elites clinging to their privileges.

That’s why I propose that those exclusive ethnic identities are not the cause of war but rather the result of organized violence by political elites, pursuing their particular interests. Internal socio-economic difficulties at the end of the 1980’s were dictating deep political and economic changes that home-grown democratic forces in Yugoslav society - led by prime minister Markovic and tangible in the wide popularity of his economic and political reforms - were ready to tackle. Yet, the proposed changes, including a decisive shift towards political pluralism and the market economy would challenge the privileges of ruling conservative elites. At the same time, changing international circumstances brought by the end of the Cold War - and the historical triumph of Capitalism over Communism - created a situation in which Yugoslavia had lost all of its strategic importance. Those changes also created an economic environment that permitted the existence of smaller states. The country’s existence was now actively undermined by its own political elites who had lost any interest in keeping Yugoslavia as it was.

The conservative wing of the Serbian Communist party which prevailed in Serbia in the late eighties, backed by wider conservative forces in Yugoslavian society, led the way in dismantling Yugoslavia. Faced with the prospect of painful, deep political and economic reforms that would affect their privileged position in society they demanded the return of a centralized state under their control. Led by the main architect of Yugoslavia’s demise, Slobodan Milosevic, they first used nationalism to eliminate democratic forces and secure their power in Serbia. Repeating the same process on the level of Yugoslavia proved impossible, because of the collapse of conservative forces in the Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe, and the backlash this programme created in the rest of the country. After that they opted for the creation of an enlarged Serbian nation-state, defined by the nineteenth-century theory of the Great Serbia. In the game of carving out a nation-state they were soon to gain a perfect partner in political elites of Croatia and Slovenia, who were also looking for ways to leave Yugoslavia at any cost. They, too, adhered to ethnic nationalism for these purposes. Thus, this was not an ethnic
war, but a war of political elites with opposite political programs and goals for nation states.

The ethnic nationalism was rather used as a useful tool to serve the ambitions of these elites. It helped them mobilize the masses; manufacture their consent for war and the creation of nation-states by obscuring the real reasons for war. Despite all pre-existing prejudices, historical traumas and open wounds underlining the existence of a Yugoslavian society, the differences had to be resurrected, awakened and then stimulated in an artificial way. Nationalism was employed systematically from the centre of state power and dispersed and “normalized” through all avenues of social life. It was fundamentally undemocratic and reproducing the existing totalitarian structure of communist society.7 As a result it was easily swallowed by the masses. One collective ideology was replaced with another; class was replaced with ethnic collective, the communist party with a national leader. Yet, it helped to justify and unleash the unprecedented levels of violence in order to not only produce ethnically clean nation states, but also to secure a massive social change and tectonic shift in social values. The war for nation states eventually finished up with a war for memory and a monopoly on the interpretation of the past.

It is no coincidence that the worst violence had happened in the most ethnically mixed and tolerant regions of the country. If Yugoslavia was an ‘artificial creature of the Versailles order’, and the cultural elites of that time riding on the wave of Pan-Slavism, that argument cannot be employed for Bosnia, a genuine multicultural experiment at the heart of the Balkans. An always-fragile identity of this community often called the microcosm of Yugoslavia was forged in centuries of often uneasy, but mostly peaceful coexistence of its three constitutive people. Diversity was a simple fact of life in Bosnia and one was prepared for it from its earliest days:

“...”

these Bosnians being Bosnian (Bosanac) meant growing up in a multicultural and
multireligious environment, an environment where cultural pluralism was
intrinsic to the social order. Dealing with cultural differences was part of people’s
most immediate experience of social life outside the confines of their home and it
was therefore an essential part of their identity."8

Much like Yugoslavia, the Bosnian ‘nation’ never formed for the discussed
historical reasons. Its identity rather always remained on a cultural and regional level. As
we already argued the reasons for that are found in the historically-divided loyalty of its
main three religious and national elites to the cultural and political centres of their
imagined communities that lay outside of Bosnia.9. The only difference between Bosnians
arose out of their diverse religious affiliation. At the end of the nineteenth century it
provided nationalists with a rich source of symbols with which they constructed three
separate national identities and secured the internal cohesion of each ethnic group.

As historian, writer, and one of the best connoisseurs of Bosnia’s unique culture
Ivan Lovrenovic argues, those separate national identities cannot be fully understood
outside the specific Bosnian context of their shared history.10 In spite of a high degree of
isolation and separation present in the sphere of high culture, where all three religions
and nations inhabited their own world, there was always a great deal of collaboration and
overlapping in the folk culture of everyday life. There, each separate identity was
fashioned, determined and augmented by the other two. After all, they were people of the
same ethnic stock, speaking one language, always intermingling and sharing the same
habits for centuries. Lovrenovic describes Bosnia, not only as the simple sum of its parts,
but the unique process of civilisation, a permanent cultural interaction where each part
was determined, shaped, enriched and enlarged by this unique cultural interaction and its
own Bosnian component:

8 Tone Brinja, Being Muslim the Bosnian Way, Identity and a Community in central Bosnian Village,
9 Lovrenovic, Bosna, kraj stoljeca, p. 109.
“The essence of the Bosnian cultural heritage is the complexity of its civilization, the simultaneity of one shared and three separate traditions. Organically linked as they are (the shared one and the three different ones), not to see, or not to want to see, any one member of this complicated combination means consenting to the impoverishment of one’s own being.”

I have argued that the existence of Yugoslavia as a strong and secular state left a positive legacy for Bosnia’s unique multicultural experience. The Bosnian communist state paradoxically acted as a substitute for non-existent Bosnian civic nationalism, as it provided its people with a stable secular environment and genuine equality regardless of nationality. Despite the initial repression of the communist regime and its zero tolerance policy towards any real or imagined enemy, it enabled Bosnians to mix and to blur the lines that divided them even further. They forged friendships, intermarried, adopted each other’s cuisine and everyday habits, and still could culturally communicate across the republican borders with their domicile nations and other Yugoslavs.

Again, this is not an argument that Bosnia was an ethnic paradise and an idyllic multicultural society. But it was certainly far from the claims of the nationalist forces, which denied its existence and committed murder in effect perpetrating the falsehood that life together was impossible and that war was unavoidable. This was not the spontaneous eruption of ethnic hatred, a ‘clash of civilizations’, or a civil war between three ethnic groups. It was a war led by Serbia, and then joined by Croatia to dismantle Bosnia and enlarge their ethnically pure nation-states. They were joined by a passive and late response by the International community, who, despite their rhetoric of multiculturalism, accepted the leaders of nationalist forces as the only legitimate representatives of their nations and legitimized the policy of ethnic cleansing. That enabled Bosnia to be constituted after the war as non-functioning sum of ethnically divided encampments and thus permanently undermined the possibility of its transformation into a functioning state.

---

Perhaps the nation is not a completely imagined concept. The myths we inherit, imagined or historically unchecked narratives we listen to are the ties that bind us together in our ‘imagined communities’. We adopt them very early in the process of our socialization, and internalize them often unconsciously. They form our cultural identity, shape our societies and affect the way we deal with the world around us. They give us protection, security and insulation against the outside world: “When I am among my own people they understand me, as I understand them; and this understanding creates within me a sense of being somebody in the world.”

In spite of the efforts of national and religious elites to portray ethnic and cultural identities as ‘uninterrupted, authentic and original’, our story tells us that ethnicity is not a rigid and static category but rather a “fluid and complex relational process of identification.” It is never static but malleable, contextual and socially constructed. As I have argued, in fifty years of Tito’s state, Serbs in Croatia, especially the urban population, came to culturally resemble their Croatian neighbours more than their ethnic kin in Serbia. Likewise for Croats in Serbia, who overwhelmingly on the last pre-war census declared themselves as Yugoslavs, undermining the basis of Yugoslav policies under which one person should have a single national identification, and raising eyebrows of many of the Croatian political elite. Urban Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims came to resemble each other much more than the members of their respective ethnic kin outside Bosnia. Even their domicile nations (Serbs and Croats in Serbia and Croatia), acknowledged this fact, calling them with a common name, Bosanci (Bosnians), thus denying them symbolically the membership in their imagined communities. The change came with the war when their inclusion was needed to justify and fulfill the territorial ambitions of their states.

Violence was necessary to change that fact, to force those people to ‘rediscover’ their traditional religious and ethnic identities, to force those in mixed marriages and their children to choose their ‘true’ identity, to construct ethnicity as a rigid category, and “ethnic groups as clearly bounded, monolithic, unambiguous units whose member are linked through ineffable bonds of blood and history and who thus have a single objective

---

13 Isaiah Berlin as quoted in Ignatieff’s, Blood and Belonging, p.10.
14 V.P.Gagnon Jr., The Myth, of Ethnic War, p.8.
15 Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, p.240.
common interest which is identified with the status quo elites."\textsuperscript{16} The destruction of the most multicultural Yugoslav communities in Vukovar, Mostar and Sarajevo is not accidental. They had to be physically destroyed with atrocities - rape and murder - to produce a new society, to justify nation states, to ascribe new identities, and to destroy any possibility for multicultural space in the future.\textsuperscript{17}

The irrational argument of nationalism was used to reduce the complex and plural identities of Yugoslavia’s people, developed in forty years of peace, to only one dimension - belonging to an ethnic collective. Bosnians and Yugoslavs are not different from the other people and their failure to build a lasting state cannot be blamed on their character but to a unique set of contingent historical factors. Potential for a violent collapse is always present in any society, and the reasons for that have to be looked for in the hardest thing to grasp, human character. However, it is the rational instruments of the state that would give the prominence to one set of factors over the other. “Like Freud’s psychopath, the former Yugoslavia is an exaggeration of the same forces present within all multicultural, multiethnic societies.”\textsuperscript{18}

For seven decades Yugoslavia was not able to effectively defuse the ethnic question by producing a legitimate democratic system, guaranteed with political pluralism, the rule of law and the institutions of civil society. The state’s repeated failure to define itself as the neutral arbiter which facilitates the dispassionate debate about all the underlining issues was due to various contingent political, economic, social, and cultural factors discussed in this study. It would prove crucial for the existence and eventual demise of Yugoslavia. Thus, all theories of ancient hatred and irredeemable differences between its people have to be refuted. It is the dysfunctional political system,

\textsuperscript{16} V.P.Gagnon Jr., \textit{The Myth of Ethnic War}, p.8.
\textsuperscript{17} The violence committed altered the environment that not only the victims, but also perpetrators of the crime would find themselves in. For instance, after they were pushed into a conflict orchestrated by their political elite and had unleashed violence against their neighbours, Bosnian Serbs found themselves in a radically altered environment that affected the “how and with whom, they could identify themselves. They no longer had a choice to live and identify in the ways they had before. Their resulting behaviour was not so much the result of ‘free choice’ but rather had been structured by the actions of the elites. Their particular sense of community was not the result of bonds predicated by ethnic sentiment, but was determined by violence that structured political space. Hence, most people, such as Serbs within the Serbian Republic of Bosnia, but also the Croats in the Croatian Herceg-Bosna had very limited choices, the least evil of which was often silence.” V.P.Gagnon Jr, \textit{The Myth of Ethnic War}, p.27.
\textsuperscript{18} Wilmer, \textit{The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War}, p.263.
lack of political legitimacy, dialogue, democracy, civil society, and the rule of law that brought this multicultural community to a collapse.

A different idea of the state and nation, the one that is vesting sovereignty of the state into individual citizen while respecting the plurality and complexity of society by adhering to a wider frame of liberal democracy and rule of law, would be much more suitable for the intermixed populations of Yugoslavia: “The only reliable antidote to ethnic nationalism turns out to be civic nationalism, because the only guarantee that ethnic groups will live side by side in peace is shared loyalty to a state strong enough, fair enough, equitable enough to command their obedience.”19

This study argued that genuine federalism and a multicultural society are possible only along the lines of individual and rational political attachment to the institutions of the state. The success of states such as Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, Australia or Canada tells us that multicultural, multiethnic and multinational society can be successful. They all have their unique history and sets of factors in which they differ. Yet, they all promulgate the civic political loyalty to the federal centre, while providing general equality to all of its citizens, its nations and ethnic communities. They are all parliamentary democracies that adhere to the liberal democratic ideal. Democracy does not include only a right to cast a vote. The rule of law, individual civil rights, independent justice system, and free press are paramount. And that is where Tito’s Yugoslavia has

19 Ignatieff, Blood and Belonging, p.245. Smith argues that the difference between ethnic and civic nationalism is well entrenched in literature, but it rather should be analytical and normative. Nationalism is a phenomenon with deep cultural roots and even most civic-political nationalisms often contain elements of ethnic (cultural) nationalism, and the other way around. Even if the nation state is based on a pure civic (political) concept and secured by the existence of democratic institutions, every political elite, to some degree, uses the elements of the ethnic (cultural) nationalism to promote and maintain the unity of the state. Yet different forms of nationalism obviously do exist and some seem to be more tolerant and inclusive towards minorities than others. Ignatieff is also aware that the western narrative of a modern state based on an exclusive civic identity and its neutrality towards ethnicity is at least contestable. It often feeds on the illusion of peaceful life in prosperous Western democracies, in the last half century. Yet, even within these societies ethnic nationalism is often disguised and often uses civic symbols of the state to connect them with a particular ethnic identity. There are many examples (European white racism would be just one of them) of ethnic nationalism that is gaining ground in European societies, even those with long democratic traditions. Nationalism remains a perplexing phenomenon that eludes any firm definition. It is rather that every nationalist movement is determined by many idiosyncratic factors and has to be seen as a product of its own historical context. Yet, the cultivation of a civic identity within the frame of strong democratic society remains the only available remedy that can keep this volatile phenomenon in check. Smith, Nationalism and Modernism, p.126. Also Ignatieff, Blood and Belonging, pp.242-9.
failed and where Bosnia will fail if nothing is done soon to change its constitution and redefine the relation between its citizens, the three nations and their Bosnian state.

As we could see from our narrative, each of the three analyzed communities were in the role of oppressor or victim at one point in history. We cannot heal the past or ever have a complete picture of it, yet we should be able to discuss it in open dialogue because it affects greatly our present and our future. If we cannot imagine ourselves as a single nation because of our contingent past that has produced our cultural differences, we could share an effort and commitment to live together as a political community of equals. Coexistence and acceptance of the different ‘Other’ is not an act of the simple declaration of intentions but a complicated process, a major contrivance, which requires an effort from the whole society. Above all it needs a frame of the strong and unbiased state that provides a neutral environment where the ‘Other’ can be met, in which diversity is respected and discussed, tolerance is promoted, and prejudice is rejected.

In the name of the nation-state and outdated nineteenth century theories two multicultural societies were destroyed and dismembered at the end of twentieth century. Yugoslavia is dead, and Bosnia is barely clinging to life with an uncertain future. None of them could be framed into a narrow frame of an ethnic nation-state. Reconstructing Bosnia could only be done by guaranteeing its sovereignty and redefining its political life along the lines of civic nationalism. Its political identity cannot be rooted in any of the three ethnic collectives but rather in the democratic institutions of its future state that guaranties equal rights to all of its citizens and each of its nations. The imagined and mythologized kinship has to be replaced with civil identities that once again can accommodate the existence of multiple identities that Bosnians and Yugoslavs had fostered for so long.

Yet its reconstitution is impossible without re-imagining Yugoslavia. Not as a political project, in so far as the project of Yugoslavia, and even its name, is tarnished and certainly dead, probably forever. But a solution for the Bosnian Question always included actors living outside of its borders, as much as those cohabiting inside them. Democratic Bosnia is truly impossible without a truly democratic Serbia and Croatia, as
well as without the wider regional collaboration between all successor states of the
Former Yugoslavia.

Wider regional collaboration, economic, social and cultural interchange would
support the development of civil societies within the whole region, re-establishment of
the severed economic and social ties to help facilitate the final goal of wider European
integration.\textsuperscript{20} It is a necessity of life but it is also an imperative for lasting peace. It
would ease the opening of debate about the common past in a cold and dispassionate
way, foster a dialogue that would attempt to disentangle myth from reality and finally
seek ways to accommodate each other while protecting universal human rights and the
rights of ethnic minorities. This would ultimately offer a potential exit from the vicious
cycle of negative history in which the concept of nation-state has thrown the whole
region for the last hundred years.

Some sorts of regional collaboration that are supposed to precede full European
integration of these spaces are slowly taking place over the last few years. Yugoslav
people have depended on each other for a long period of time. They have developed
extensive economic, cultural and social ties, and despite the efforts of their elites they still
understand each other very well: “The former Yugoslavs have too much in common not
to cooperate, and with falling populations and similar problems of economic
modernization, they have every reason to do so.”\textsuperscript{21}

After the almost suicidal experience of the Second World War, Europe seemed to
find its way. Yesterday’s bitter enemies, who share a much bloodier common history than
the South Slavs, have agreed to delegate a good deal of their national sovereignty to the
common European state. It is based on principles of liberal democracy, economic
prosperity, rule of law and secular civil society. It is a large multinational, multicultural
and multiethnic collective that is trying to reconcile internal divisions and often
conflicting identities of its members on the basis of common interest, rational
collaboration, tolerance, genuine equality and mutual respect. Despite its difficult past it
is slowly being constructed out of what was until yesterday only a utopian idea.

The idea of a European Union is nothing else but the idea of Yugoslavia that has lived up to its promises. One day future leaders of Yugoslav successor states might stand side by side in the United Europe, as today the British, German and French do. They must then remember all the victims of the senseless war from the beginning of the 1990’s and “deeply scorn and condemn the tragic circumstances in which their states were formed.”

Slavenka Drakulic at the end of her poignant book “Balkan Express”, recalling the story from Claude Lanzmann’s documentary ‘Shoah’, laments the destiny of the Jews deported to concentration camps: “I understand now that nothing but this ‘otherness’ killed Jews, and it began by naming them, by reducing them to the other.” Nationalism orchestrated by communist elites at the end of the 1980’s managed to turn yesterday’s compatriots, friends and ‘brothers’ into foreigners, then foes, and finally ‘Others’ that should be removed. What the people of Yugoslavia who bought this nationalist fantasy did not see is that this manipulation would turn them all into ‘others’ in the wars that would follow.

Late American post-modern philosopher Richard Rorty was arguing that democracy is a product of our human solidarity stemming from the fact “that there is nothing in the universe to hang on to except each other.” Democracy and civil society itself might be an illusion or a construct, but it is most likely the finest product of our civilisation and certainly something worth clinging to: “Civilisation, Yeats reminded us, is tied together by a hoop of illusion. It would be dangerous to pretend that the illusion is real, but it is fatal to dispense with it altogether.” Only through democratic institutions can we try to find shelter from the irrationality of nationalism, transcend prejudice and the constraints of our own culture in order to arrive at our common human denominator. There, we should accommodate and defend each other as we failed to do so many times in our past. The people of Yugoslavia did not know how to resolve their differences coming from a complex past or to reformulate the even more complicated relationship

23 Drakulic, Balkan Express, p.145.
between the nation and state. That unfortunately does not make their case unique in the long drama and immense suffering of humanity:

“We are at war, we carry in us the possibility of the mortal illness that is slowly reducing us to what we never thought possible, and I am afraid there is no one else to blame. We all make it possible, we allow it to happen. Our defense is weak, as is our consciousness of it. There are no us and them, there are no grand categories, abstract numbers, black and white truths, and simple facts. There is only us - and, yes, we are responsible for each other.”26

26 Drakulic, *Balkan Express*, p.146.
Bibliography:

Journals:

BH Dani, weekly, Sarajevo
Feral Tribune, weekly, Split
Novi List, daily, Rijeka
Republika, monthly, Beograd
Vreme, weekly, Beograd

Websites:

Following websites were used to access the number of articles quoted in the footnotes of each chapter:

www.balkaninsight.com
www.bh-hchr.org
www.bosnia.org
www.cdsee.org
www.christinebernardz.worldpress.com
www.ec.europa.eu
www.e-novine.com
www.h-alter.org
www.hrw.org
www.pescanik.net
www.rferl.org
www.scribed.com
www.wikipedia.org
www.webcache.com

Articles and Books:


Djuric Ivan, “*Istorijski koreni Srpsko-Hrvatskog sukoba*”, Vlast, Opozicija, Alternativa, Helsinski Odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, Beograd, 2009


Hadzic Miroslav, “The Army’s Use of Trauma” in Popov’s The Road to War In Serbia, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2000

Hall Edward T., Beyond Culture, Random House, New York, 1976


Ignatieff Michael, Blood and Belonging, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1993


Ivekovic Ivan, Ethnic and Regional Conflicts in Yugoslavia and Transcaucasia, Longo Editore, Roma, 2000

Jelavich Charles, South Slav Nationalisms-Textbooks and Yugoslav Union before 1914, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 1990

Jergovic Miljenko, Naci bonton, Durieux, Zagreb, 1998


Kasapovic Mirjana, *Bosna i Hercegovina, podijeljeno drustvo i nestabilna drzava*, Politicka kultura, Zagreb, 2005


Lovrenovic Dubravko, “*Bosnjacka recepcija bosanskog srednjovjekovlja, geneza bougumilskog mita i njegove suvremene politicke implikacije*”, Zenicke Sveske, Bosansko Narodno Pozoriste, Zenica, 2005


Lovrenovic Ivan, *Bosna, kraj stoljeca*, Durieux, Zagreb, 1996


Matvejevic Predrag, *Jugoslavenstvo Danas*, Beogradski Izdavacki Gradski Zavod, 1984


Mestrovic Ivan, *Sjecanja na politike ljudi i dogadjaje*, Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, Zagreb, 1993

Minic Milos, *Dogovori u Karadjordjevu o podeli Bosne i Hercegovine*, Rabis, Sarajevo, 1998

Milosavljevic Olivera, “*Yugoslavia as a Mistake*”, in Popov’s *The Road to War in Serbia*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2000


Riedlmayer Andas, “From the Ashes: Bosnia’s Cultural Heritage” in Statzmiller, Islam and Bosnia, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2001

Rusinow Dennison, Yugoslavia, Oblique Insights and Observations, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2008


Smith Anthony D., Nationalism and Modernism, Rutledge, London, 1998


Sokolovic Dzemal, Nation vs. People, Cambridge Scholars Press, Newcastle, 2006


Todorova Maria, Imagining the Balkans, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997

Todorovic Dragan, Book of Revenge, A Blues for Yugoslavia, Vintage Canada, Toronto, 2006

Tucovic Dimitrije, Srbija i Albanija, jedan prilog kritici zavojevacke politike srpske burzoazije. Pescanik, Beograd, 2010


